

AAA counters rate hike with war on car thefts

Blaming the growing statewide problem of car thefts, the Automobile Club of Michigan has announced an auto insurance rate increase along with an all-out program to fight car thefts.

The new rate, to take effect Friday, July 1, will generate an 8.4-percent increase in premium dollars collected annually by the Auto Club's Insurance Group, according to Thomas G. Bowman, Auto Club Insurance director. He said it was the first increase in 10 months.

He reported that the Auto Club's Insurance Group paid out more than \$50 million in stolen car claims during 1982, a 50-percent increase from the previous year. The number of stolen cars rose 36 percent last year.

"WE'RE NOT going to take this assault on our members lying down," Bowman said.

"We're swinging into ACTION — Arrest Car Thieves in Our Neighborhoods. This program will offer large cash rewards, involve hundreds of thousands of car owners in learning how to win this war, etch protective identification numbers on window glass, and recommend change of our laws to crack down on car thieves."

Bowman also noted that the medical benefits claims in 1982 reached \$33 million, up 14 percent from the previous year.

"What's more, we'll pay out close to \$20 million in claims for damage caused by the May 2 hailstorm in southeastern Michigan," Bowman said. "While we can't do much about hailstorms, we are going to do all we can to stop auto thefts."

BEGINNING JULY 1, Auto Club will offer rewards of up to \$1,000 for the arrest and conviction of individual car thieves and up to \$10,000 for the break-up and conviction of organized theft rings and "chop shops" operators. These rings steal cars, often on assignment, and deliver them to chop shops for dismantling, after which the parts are sold.

"Car thefts are a growing problem throughout the state," said Cpl. Tony Masterofranco of the Dearborn Police Crime Prevention Unit, who attended the news conference at the Auto Club's Dearborn headquarters.

"The amateur thieves have been enough of a problem, but the growing presence of these car-theft rings requires strong countermeasures by vehicle owners. Only about half the cars reported stolen are ever recovered," Masterofranco said.

"The days of teenage joy riding in so-called borrowed cars are over, and now the real criminals are in the drivers' seats. And, of course, the more valuable the automobile, the more likely it is to be stolen for sale or conversion."

KEY TO THE anti-theft program is the VIN — Vehicle Identification Number, a series of digits and letters that carry several bits of information and can trace the car to its rightful owner.

"A car's vehicle identification number is as individual as a fingerprint," said Masterofranco. "With that VIN etched into the glass or other surface of a vehicle, we can trace the legitimate owner, even if the original identification plate has been removed by the thieves."

Auto Club plans a comprehensive program to assist car owners in etching the VIN into the vehicles' windshields and other glass areas. This will make the vehicle readily identifiable to any police officer who comes in contact with it. Any Auto Club-insured car that has had its VIN etched in glass will carry a special sticker indicating it is protected.

"A thief is certain to have second thoughts about stealing a car with the VIN etched on the windshield or other glass. The realization that glass would have to be replaced before the car could be sold would be a real deterrent," Masterofranco said.

outdoors

Golf, camping on tap throughout county

An array of spirited activities are planned for this month by the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission.

The Ninth Annual Junior Golf Invitational will be Thursday at Springfield Oaks Golf Course in Davisburg, and Friday at White Lake Oaks Golf Course in Pontiac.

The event is open to anyone under age 19. The entry fee is \$18 for age 11 and younger, and \$24 for age 12 and older. Entry deadline is Tuesday. For more information, call 698-2700 or 623-2540.

Campers will have a new place to pitch their tents when the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission dedicates its new campground at Addison Oaks County Park at 11 a.m. Saturday.

The new camping area includes 50 modern campsites with water and electrical hookups, as well as a restroom/shower building.

Addison Oaks is a 750-acre park that provides swimming, fishing, picnicking, hiking and snowmobiling. The park is located on W. Romeo Road, 12 miles north of Rochester, near Oxford.

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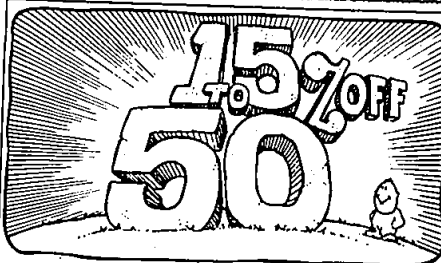
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Pool offers swim lessons

Swimming instruction will be offered at the Waterford Oaks Wave Action Pool starting today. The waves will not be on during swim lessons.

Persons age 5 through adult are invited to participate in 10-day programs.

Classes have been categorized by age and swimming level, from beginner to advanced. Four sessions of each class will be available throughout the summer.

"The wave pool offers an excellent instructional site due to the zero to eight foot depth of the pool," said Tom Jackson, Waterford Oaks Park supervi-

sor, who adds that all swim instructors are certified Red Cross Water Safety instructors.

Instruction fee is \$17.50 per session, per student.

An advanced life-saving class also will be offered to those 15 and over. Cost for this class is \$30, which includes the price of a life-saving manual.

For more information, call the Waterford Oaks Wave Action Pool at 358-0918. Waterford Oaks is off Scott Lake Road near Dixie Highway, in Pontiac.

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