



A television crew highlights a smiling Spreen, Lucas and Koltys. Their message, however, was serious. "One car is stolen

every 10 minutes in Michigan," Spreen told the audience at the press conference.

Police want you to lock it and pocket your car keys

For years, law enforcement agencies have told the public to call on them for help. Now they are calling on the public.

They want the public's cooperation in their fight against auto theft, the new threat of Michigan crime fighters.

In an attempt to draw attention to the severity of auto theft crime, Gov. William G. Milliken declared the week of Sept. 25-29 as "Lock It and Pocket the Key Week."

"Car theft is becoming an increasingly serious problem. The most important steps the motorist can take is to lock the automobile and pocket the key," Milliken said.

Law enforcement agencies throughout the state Monday announced publicly their involvement in the mass campaign against car thefts. Representatives of Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties announced joint efforts at the Pontiac Silverdome.

Oakland County Sheriff Johannes Spreen, Wayne County Sheriff William Lucas, and Macomb County Inspector Conrad Koltys (representing Sheriff William Hackel) discussed the importance of combined citizen and police efforts to curb the costly crime.

"Auto theft is a very serious problem. One car is stolen every 10 minutes in Michigan," said Spreen. "Last year, 50,000 vehicles were stolen in the state, amounting to more than \$110 million. More than 50 per cent of the cars stolen were left unlocked. More than 20 per cent of these still had the keys in them."

In Oakland County, there was a 27 per cent increase in auto theft in 1977, with an increase of 287 cars stolen in the first six months of 1978, Spreen said.

"THE BEST way to fight car theft is by prevention," added Lucas. "Don't leave your car running when you go into a store for a package of cigarettes. Whenever you leave your car, lock it and pocket the key."

Students receive bachelor degrees

Paul D. Wicker and Jon Sarkesian, both of Farmington Hills, recently received degrees from Lawrence Institute of Technology. Wicker received a bachelor of science degree in construction engineering and Sarkesian, a bachelor of architecture.

The sheriffs pointed out the reasons for the increase in auto thefts.

"The major problem is that organized crime is now involved," Spreen said. "They have a calculated, ingenious system of stealing cars, making them unrecognizable and getting disposing of them."

Other reasons include the decrease in recovery due to increased sophistication of the thieves, fragmentation of information among agencies, the judicial system's treatment of auto theft as a minor crime, and the involvement of youths in auto theft.

1977 statistics show that 69 per cent of those arrested for car theft were 17 years old or younger. Another 25 per cent were between the ages of 18 and 25.

"Stealing an automobile is one of the easiest crimes for a youth to commit," said Spreen.

THE PUBLIC'S LACK of precautionary measures when leaving cars unattended is another major factor for increasing auto theft statistics. In addition to locking one's car and taking the keys from the ignition, the three sheriffs encouraged the public follow other tips.

Park in a lighted spot is one tip. Others are closing the car windows, keeping costly items out of sight inside the car and not keeping a spare key on the body of the vehicle.

The sheriffs also encouraged more sophisticated anti-theft devices, particularly for flashy or expensive cars, favorites of auto thieves.

Car owners can have door lock buttons installed without flat tops. These are more difficult to open with metal hangers than locks with flat tops. Consumers can get push button hood locks that hampers anyone trying to open the car hood and hot wire the car.

A motorist can add a gas line cutoff switch to the vehicle. This stops the flow of gas from the tank to carburetor. Complex electronic alarm systems are costly but can discourage a car thief. The systems, when activated, set off loud sirens or flashing lights.

The mechanically inclined driver can protect the car by removing the ignition coil wire and rotor, a small piece on the distributor. Without these, an auto can't be started.

After the conference, an Oakland County sheriff's deputy demonstrated how easy it is to get into a car. Using a thin metal device, he opened a locked door of a car in less than five seconds.



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