

# 'Hot' cars are no bargain

Cars are no longer just stolen by joyriders. Professional car thieves are pros at altering vehicle identification and supplying counterfeit documents for stolen cars that are often sold at rock-bottom prices, says the Southfield-based Automotive Information Council (AIC).

While being offered a luxury car for an unbelievably low price may be tempting to some, buying a "hot" car is no bargain, AIC says. If the police dis-

cover that a person has purchased a stolen vehicle, the auto is automatically impounded and the buyer isn't able to recover either the car or the money spent on it.

To avoid being stuck with a stolen vehicle, AIC recommends these tips when buying a used car:

• Deal only with a reputable dealer or an individual you know and trust. Be on your guard if a seller has no fixed address or phone number.

• Be very suspicious if the price of a car offered is substantially lower than normal, such as \$2,000 for a late model luxury car.

• A fresh paint job on an almost-new auto may indicate a cover-up by thieves.

• Don't buy a car that doesn't have all the proper paperwork. Check the car's Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) with the VIN listed on the title.

• Avoid a deal if the seller absolutely demands cash.

• Always obtain a receipt for the sale, which both parties have signed.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report indicates the peak theft year in the U.S. was 1980 when 1,144,851 vehicles were stolen. In 1982, 1,046,310 vehicles were stolen, representing a 2.4 percent decrease over 1981 when 1,073,988 vehicles were stolen. These statistics underscore the size of the auto theft problem in the U.S., says AIC.

# Psychologists urge seatbelt law

By Mattie Greene  
staff writer

After seeing lives shattered because of profound head injuries in automobile accidents and seeing the emotional cost to the victims' families, the members of the Michigan Psychiatric Society have become believers — in seat belts.

So strong is the society's belief that seat belts can prevent many of these injuries that they urged the passage of a mandatory seat belt bill in the state legislature.

The bill reached the Michigan House where it was the subject of debate and several amendments. Last week the bill was returned to a House committee for further study. Proponents of the bill say they plan to continue fighting for passage of the legislation.

"The mental health benefits of seat belt use have largely been ignored in the debate on the seat belt bill," said Dr. Melvin Reinhart, president of the 900 member society, which is headquartered in Southfield.

Reinhart has worked with several young people who have suffered brain damage as a result of an auto accident. "I have gauged their slow recovery

problems. They have difficulty learning and remembering and have speech problems which make them difficult to understand. It's heartbreaking to see their adjustment after being involved in a needless event," Reinhart said.

Working with a neuro-psychologist, Reinhart said he has monitored the progress of patients, many of them young, and had a chance to interview their family members. The family, also, has to make a tremendous adjustment, Reinhart said.

"OFTEN THESE patients are reduced to the mental level of infants. The parents have to learn cues to be able to respond to their requests. Some are college kids and this happens at the height of their productivity. Parents may become despondent knowing their aspirations for their child may never be realized."

Reinhart said the recovery may take years and the parents have to worry about the care of their child if something happens to them.

"The parents are sitting on the edge of their chair looking and hoping for signs of improvement," Reinhart said. In addition, if the parents are caring

for the injured child, it may produce conflicts among siblings who may be neglected due to the inordinate amount of care needed by the accident victim. Also, Reinhart added, there is the continuous soul searching that goes on. Parents ask themselves if they should have let their son or daughter have the car and so on.

The organization recognizes individual liberties, but believes they must be kept in balance with social responsibilities, Reinhart said. The society insists that basic concern and compassion dictate the use of seat belts by all occupants of an automobile.

The society is pushing for the passage of House Bill 5203, which would

make wearing seat belts a must.

The most costly injury to suffer from an accident is the closed head injury. Based on an American Automobile Association report, 500 Michigan residents suffered closed head injuries and up to 90 percent could have been prevented with the use of seat belts.

Average acute care and treatment expenses amount to \$52,000 according to the AAA report. Inpatient rehabilitation can cost an average of \$50,000 a year, while outpatient costs, beyond those involved in equipment and home modification, average more than \$10,000 annually.

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