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SHEBOYGAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

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NEWS RELEASE

Sheboygan Police Explorer Post Vehicle Check Program successful in increasing Prevention

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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SHEBOYGAN – The numbers have been reviewed and the Sheboygan Police Department’s Vehicle Courtesy Check program has had a significant impact on improving prevention behaviors.

The courtesy checks, conducted with the help of the Sheboygan Police Law Enforcement Explorer Post, are intended to reinforce the simple steps vehicle owners can take to substantially reduce their chances of becoming a victim of theft. Law Enforcement Explorers inspected vehicles to look for obvious risk factors, such as unlocked doors and valuables in plain view, leaving a "report card" on all inspected vehicles letting owners know how they did. Neighborhood police officers would then follow up immediately with owners of failing vehicles to encourage them to correct the risk factors and hopefully prevent a crime from occurring.

So far, the program has conducted inspections six times -- twice in each of three neighborhoods which were identified as being "hotspots" for thefts from vehicles. Sgt. Kurt Zempel, who supervises the Sheboygan Police Department's Explorer Post, said theft from vehicles was targeted because it is one of the most preventable types of crime.

“Our experience with thefts in Sheboygan shows that vehicle owners who leave valuables in sight inside an unlocked vehicle are far more likely to have their property stolen,” he said. “The good news is that just the opposite is true as well – removing valuables and

locking your vehicle significantly lowers your chance of being a victim of theft,” he said.

In total, 869 vehicles were inspected, with hundreds of owners and residents contacted by officers and Explorers in the targeted neighborhoods to discuss crime prevention. The numbers of passing and failing vehicles were compared from the first and second rounds of inspections to see if risk factors for thefts from vehicles were impacted.

In the first round of inspections, more than 41% of vehicles received failing grades, due to factors ranging from cash or electronics sitting out in open vehicles or even keys in the ignition. During repeat inspections of the same "hotspot" neighborhoods, the rate of failing vehicles dropped dramatically, to less than 16%. That translates to more than a 50% reduction in failing vehicles for each of the three neighborhoods.

"It's clear that residents in these neighborhoods have heard the message of crime prevention," Zempel said. "By engaging directly with the people who have been most victimized by these preventable crimes, we're hopeful that we have encouraged continued prevention habits and that it will help prevent thefts well into the future," he said.

Zempel said Sheboygan Police plan to continue targeting the vehicle checks to neighborhoods that have a higher rate of thefts from vehicles, thefts from yards and bicycle thefts to bring the benefit of prevention to those areas as well. He said the department will also continue to monitor and evaluate the results, including a comparison of reported thefts in the targeted areas before and after the program, to gauge whether the improved prevention habits have led to fewer thefts.
