



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Office of the Attorney General

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For Immediate Release

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Increase in Car Thefts Prompts Alert by the Attorney General

Office of the Attorney General, Saipan – The Office of the Attorney General has seen an increase in reports of stolen cars. These cases are largely crimes of opportunity by younger individuals acting in a group. In 2019, a total of 6 theft of vehicle charges were received by the OAG whereas, in the first three months of 2020, the office has received 5 reported cases of stolen vehicles. Perhaps this is a good time to remind everyone how they can do their part to reduce the likelihood more cars are stolen.

Did you know that CNMI traffic laws make it a crime to leave your car running while you go into a store? The Commonwealth Code, as written by our Legislature, provides that it is a traffic violation. Found in Title 6, section 5606, the law states: “No person operating or in charge of a motor vehicle may permit it to stand unattended without first stopping the engine, locking the ignition, removing the ignition key, and, when standing upon any grade, turning the front wheels to the curb or side of the highway.”

Attorney General Edward Manibusan reminds all motorists to “turn off your car engine and take the key with you as it serves several important purposes, such as avoiding wasting valuable gas, reducing unnecessary exhaust that pollutes our air, avoid endangering others with an accident from an unattended running vehicle, and minimizing the opportunity for others to enter the car and steal it.”

In several of the recent stolen car cases, the vehicles were not running, but the owner left the keys in the car. Thieves will sometimes use those keys to drive off the car. Some thieves take the keys and come back later, stealing the car at night. In most of these cases, the cars were damaged by reckless driving and personal property was stolen. That reckless driving can also damage public property or injure innocent victims.

AG Manibusan says, “We don’t want to prosecute citations against people who leave their cars running outside their home or a store. We want car owners to get educated and act responsibly, helping avoid the loss and damage of their valuable cars.” The AG adds, let’s watch out for each other by following the laws, make our roads safer and protect your property from theft.”

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