



OFFICE OF THE
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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Carol Shipley

Date: April 30, 2010

Assistant District Attorney

Re: Billy Joe Cooper

Phone: (209) 525-5550

**Auto Thief Sentenced to
Eight Years, Eight Months Prison**

Modesto, California – Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Billy Joe Cooper, age 40, of Modesto, was convicted on April 30, 2010 of possession of a stolen vehicle, failure to appear, and an enhancement for the commission of a new felony offense while out on his own recognizance on a prior felony offense. Cooper also admitted three prison priors: a May 2006 conviction for auto theft; an October 1999 conviction for possession of methamphetamine; and a November 1997 conviction for possession of methamphetamine. Deputy District Attorney Jeffrey W. Mangar prosecuted the case for the People.

On March 30, 2009 at approximately 5:00 p.m. in the area of Crater Avenue in Modesto, Cooper was backing up a vehicle with three passengers inside near a friend's house. An officer observed Cooper strike a fire hydrant. The officer had just received a tip that Cooper's friend had a stolen vehicle at this residence. At Cooper's friend's house, the officer located a 1994 black Lexus ES300 that had been reported stolen at about 10:00 a.m. that same morning out of Turlock. One of the passengers in the stopped car possessed the key to the stolen Lexus, while another passenger tried to throw away the Lexus's vehicle registration out the car window. Cooper then tried to run away, but was immediately caught a short distance away.

On January 5, 2010, Cooper failed to appear for one of his court dates. The judge issued a bench warrant for his arrest. On February 17, 2010 at approximately 12:30 p.m., officers of the Stanislaus County Auto Theft Task Force (StanCATT) received a tip that Cooper was in the area of East Greenway Avenue in Turlock. After arriving in the area, officers stopped a vehicle in which Cooper was a passenger and arrested him on his outstanding warrant.

The Honorable Ricardo Cordova sentenced Cooper to eight years and eight months in prison.

Stanislaus County residents can report suspected vehicle theft activity to their local law enforcement agency or contact the Stanislaus County Auto-Theft Task Force (STANCATT) at: (209) 545-7316.

IF YOU OBSERVE A THEFT IN PROGRESS, DIAL 911

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