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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Carol Shipley

Date: April 28, 2010

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Re: Michael Lawrence Hopper
Auto Thief Sentenced to Four Years

Phone: (209) 525-5550

Modesto, California – Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Michael Lawrence Hopper, age 31, of Modesto, was convicted on April 28, 2010 of auto theft and also admitted having a prior auto theft conviction from August 2003, and that he had previously served a prison sentence following a conviction for possession of stolen property in April 2009 for which he was on parole. Deputy District Attorney Jeffrey W. Mangar prosecuted the case for the People.

On March 24, 2010 at around noon in the area of Church Street and Yosemite Avenue in Empire, an officer from the Stanislaus County Auto-Theft Task Force (StanCATT) observed Hopper and his friend next to a parked 1991 white GMC pick-up truck that had been reported stolen that morning from the street in front of the registered owner's apartment complex in Modesto. Within minutes, Hopper's friend started to drive off in the stolen pick-up truck. Hopper followed close behind in a separate vehicle. After stopping both vehicles, the officer observed, in Hopper's vehicle, a Craftsman toolbox, lunch pail, and generator that were in the pick-up truck at the time it was stolen. Inside the stolen pick-up truck, the officer observed extensive damage to the steering wheel column.

Upon entry of the plea, the Honorable Nancy Ashley sentenced Hopper to four years in state prison. Hopper's friend had previously pled guilty to auto theft for which he also received a four year sentence.

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