



OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Stanislaus County

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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Carol Shipley

Date: September 29, 2009

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Re: Michael William Castle

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Auto Thief Sentenced to 16 Months in Prison

Modesto, California – Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Michael William Castle, age 21, of Modesto, was convicted on September 29, 2009 of possession of a dangerous weapon and auto theft. Castle is currently on probation stemming from a March 2009 conviction for possession of ecstasy (MDMA). Deputy District Attorney Jeff Mangar prosecuted the case for the People.

The case arose out of events that occurred over two dates. On May 7, 2009 at approximately 2:25 a.m. in the area of Hillglen Drive by Ustach Park, a Modesto police officer observed a car with three occupants parked in a loading zone. Castle was in the rear passenger seat of the car that was being driven by his friend. A probation search of Castle revealed brass knuckles in his back pocket. Castle claimed it was for protection. After being arrested, Castle posted bail and was released from jail.

On August 11, 2009 at approximately 1:00 a.m. in the area of Fernview Drive and Atwood Drive, a Modesto police officer in a K-9 patrol vehicle observed four males standing by a recently stolen 2000 white Mercury Mountaineer. When the officer approached, all four ran away. The officer was able to apprehend two juvenile males who ran toward nearby bushes. The juveniles indicated that Castle had stolen the SUV. The owner of the SUV was not even aware that it had been stolen. The SUV had been left unlocked in the driveway. Castle had been checking for unlocked car doors on vehicles parked on the street and in driveways in order to steal anything left inside including sunglasses, stereos, and loose change. Castle located approximately five unlocked cars from which he stole items in the Dragoo Park area. Castle was apprehended several hours later.

Upon entry of the plea, the Honorable Thomas Zeff sentenced Castle to sixteen months in state prison.

The District Attorney's Office urges citizens to lock their parked cars and to keep any items out of sight since auto burglaries are primarily crimes of opportunity.

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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