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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Date: June 14, 2011

Re: Phill Anthony Owens

**Auto Thief Gets
2 Years, 8 Months Prison**

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Modesto, California – Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Phill Anthony Owens, age 39, of Modesto, was convicted on June 14, 2011 of auto theft and resisting arrest. Owens also admitted a violation of probation stemming from his possession of a forged check and driving under the influence of alcohol conviction from January 2011. Deputy District Attorney Jeff Mangar prosecuted the case for the People.

On April 13, 2011 at approximately 1:30 p.m., an officer heard a police radio broadcast that a 2006 white Chevy 2500 pick-up truck that belonged to the Union Pacific Railroad had just been stolen from 8th and H Street in Modesto. A railroad employee parked the truck on the gravel next to the tracks to assist another employee. However, the employee left the keys in the unattended truck. Within minutes, the officer observed Owens driving the truck in the area of Paradise Road and Carpenter Road. When Owens saw the officer looking at him, Owens stopped the truck, jumped out, and ran into someone's backyard. As Owens was running away, a passing female motorist directed the officer to Owens's location and he was caught a short distance away. The officer asked Owens why he took the vehicle and he responded, "Well, the keys were in it, and well, ya know."

Upon entry of the plea, the Honorable Dawna Frenchie Reeves sentenced Owens to two 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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