



OFFICE OF THE
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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Date: May 13, 2011

Re: Russell Gerald Smith

Auto Thief

Gets 4 Years

Contact Carol Shipley

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Modesto, California – Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Russell Gerald Smith, age 38, of Modesto, was convicted on May 6, 2011 of auto theft, evading a peace officer, and possession of methamphetamine. Smith also admitted previously serving a prison term stemming from a possession of stolen property conviction in November 2005. Deputy District Attorney Jeff Mangar prosecuted the case for the People.

On March 14, 2011 at approximately 4:00 a.m. in the area of Amsterdam Lane in Modesto, Smith stole a 2001 white GMC pick-up truck that had been left running, but unattended, in the owner's driveway. The owner had left his vehicle warming up for less than 20 seconds. When the owner came back outside, he noticed that his truck was missing and notified police. A patrol officer spotted the truck within minutes of the broadcast. When the officer activated his lights and siren to perform a traffic stop, Smith accelerated away ignoring several stop signs and red traffic lights and eventually collided with a tree. After placing Smith under arrest, the officer located methamphetamine in Smith's pants pocket.

Upon entry of the plea, the Honorable Dawna Frenchie Reeves sentenced Smith to four years in the California Rehabilitation Center.

The District Attorney's Office urges citizens not to leave their unattended vehicles warming up in their driveway no matter how brief.

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.