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# POLICE & FIRE

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## Car thieves target Waimanalo canoe regatta

Ron Mizutani

A canoe regatta at Waimanalo Beach Park Sunday proved to be a perfect target for thieves. Honolulu police responded to nine incidents in less than four hours.

Thousands cheer on paddlers as they reach for the finish line. Bob Yoza was one of many celebrating until he reached his dodge truck

"I seen my dash all out and apparently they stuck the screw driver in to pop the lock," said Yoza. "I seen the stereo missing and they tried to disassemble the ignition area--- look like they were getting to hot wire it."

And he wasn't alone.

"There were six cases involving auto theft, two were only attempts and four they actually took the car," said Detective John McCarthy of the Honolulu Police Department. "Five out of six cars were dodge vehicles."

"Maybe by the same perpetrator he's very dodge savvy," said Yoza, who maintains his sense of humor but knows he was a candidate for identity theft.

"Luckily I didn't keep any like my check book and wallet in there like I usually do," said Yoza.

Besides six auto theft cases there were two car break-ins and a theft on the beach. Police said a witness confronted a young male in one of the cars.

"The suspect is described as being five-feet-six inches tall, with a dark complexion and short dark hair," said McCarthy. "He was shirtless with blue board shorts and he tried to tell the lady a story about this is my car I'm stuck here while he was actually trying to steal a car."

The suspect got away.

"You've got a lot of cars in one area, people are concentrating on the regatta or beach activities," said McCarthy. "It's a crooks dream come true we've even heard them refer to it as their own personal ATM when things like that happen."

Margaret Pekelo and several community members watch over the beach park twice a week but they weren't on patrol yesterday.

"The community itself is pretty good we've got a pretty good community but to me it's the upbringing and it all stems from home," said Pekelo.

She said a few bad apples are spoiling the community's reputation.

"Go look for one job. Why rip off people's things," said Pekelo.

There was another canoe regatta happening at the same time just a few miles away at Kailua Beach Park but there were no reports of any incidents there.

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