

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY



08 - 0328

Office of the Commissioner

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March 18, 2008

Alcohol
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Enforcement

Bureau of
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Driver
and Vehicle
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Emergency
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Emergency
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Minnesota
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State of Minnesota

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The Honorable Bill Ingebrigtsen
Senate Public Safety Budget

The Honorable Linda Scheid, Chair
The Honorable Chris Gerlach
Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection

Chief Justice Russell Anderson
Minnesota Supreme Court

The Honorable Michael Paymar, Chair
The Honorable Steve Smith
House Public Safety Finance

The Honorable Joe Atkins, Chair
The Honorable Kurt Zellers
House Commerce and Labor

Dear Colleagues:

As directed by Minnesota Statute §65B.84, the commissioner of Public Safety was to develop and sponsor the implementation of statewide plans, programs, and strategies to combat automobile theft, improve the administration of the automobile theft laws, and provide a forum for identification of critical problems for those persons dealing with automobile theft.

Minnesota Statute §65B.84 Subd. 2 requires that the commissioner of Public Safety shall report on the activities and expenditures of the preceding year to the governor, and the chairs and ranking minority members of the house and senate committees having jurisdiction over the Departments of Commerce and Public Safety.

This letter is to inform you that the report is complete and is enclosed for your reference. The Department views this correspondence as satisfying the reporting requirements as provided in Minnesota Statute §65B.84 Subd. 2.

If you need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or Jeri Boisvert, Director of Minnesota Office of Justice Programs at 651 201-7305.

Sincerely,

Michael Campion, Commissioner

cc: Legislative Reference Library

2007 Auto Theft Prevention



Report to the State of Minnesota
Governor and Legislature

January 2008



Report prepared by

Office of Justice Programs
444 Cedar Street #100
St. Paul, MN 55101

Jocelyn Van Knight

AUTO THEFT PREVENTION PROGRAM
Minnesota Statutes 2004, Section 65B.84
January 1, 2008

PROGRAM MISSION

To reduce motor vehicle theft and its consequences in the State of Minnesota by funding programs which aid in the:

- Identification of Critical Issues
- Education and Awareness
- Investigation and Prosecution

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

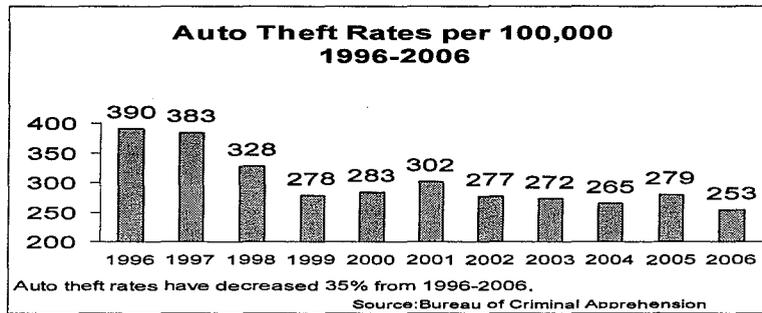
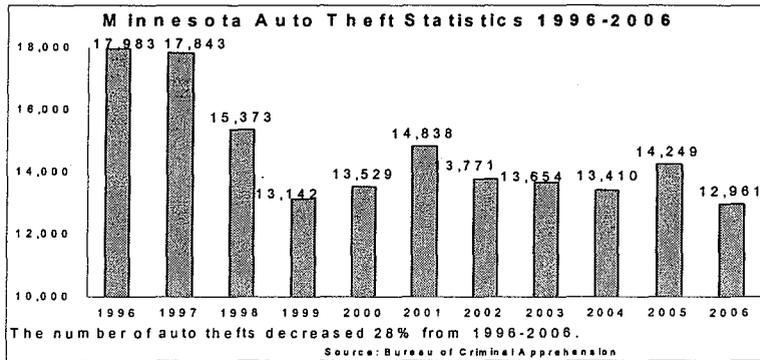
In 1996 the Minnesota Legislature created the Auto Theft Prevention Program. This program is funded from a surcharge that is collected from automobile insurance carriers that provide comprehensive insurance coverage issued in the State of Minnesota. The amount of the surcharge is \$.50 cents per vehicle for every six months of coverage. Utilizing this funding, the program makes money available through a competitive grant process for activities to address the problem of auto theft in the State of Minnesota.

In July 2004, the Auto Theft Prevention Program was transferred to the Department of Commerce. The Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs continued to administer program grants via an interagency agreement between the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Commerce.

EXTENT OF AUTO THEFT IN MINNESOTA

In 2006, the number of actual motor vehicle thefts reported in Minnesota was 12,961, a decrease of 9 percent from 2005. Motor vehicle theft represents 8 percent of property crimes in Minnesota and indicates a theft rate of 253 per 100,000 residents, an average of 36 thefts per day. The average dollar loss per motor vehicle theft was \$3,606; motor vehicle theft was 27% of Dollars Lost to Serious Crime (these values do not include the stolen and recovered values for Minneapolis PD).

Overall, Minnesota continues to experience a significant decline in motor vehicle thefts since 1996. The number of motor vehicle thefts decreased 28% compared with 1996 data; this compares to a national decline of 11.9% over the same period.



**Auto Theft in Major Counties and Cities in Minnesota
1996 - 2006**

	1996	2006	% Change 1996- 2006
Anoka County	950	768	-19.2%
Fridley	145	164	13.1%
Coon Rapids	173	140	-19.1%
Dakota County	849	548	-35.5%
Burnsville	227	125	-45%
West St. Paul	110	58	-47.3%
Hennepin County	7,674	5,175	32.6%
Bloomington	396	163	-58.9%
Brooklyn Park	230	326	41.7%
Minneapolis	5,650	3,625	-35.9%
Olmsted County (Rochester)	145	147	1.3%
Ramsey County	3,278	2,777	-15.3%
Maplewood	168	208	23.8%
Roseville	130	103	-20.8%
St. Paul	2,638	2,138	-19%
St. Louis County	583	359	-38.5%
Duluth	398	213	-46.5%
Stearns County (St. Cloud)	206	130	-36.9%
Washington County	329	368	11.8%

Source: Bureau of Criminal Apprehension

Although vehicle theft is primarily a crime of opportunity, perpetrators often favor particular makes and models. Thieves target a wide range of popular passenger vehicles, often seeking valuable parts from older model year vehicles for sale on the black market.

According to the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB), the following list ranks the ten most stolen vehicles in Minnesota in 2006.

Rank Year – Make – Model

1	1995 Honda Civic
2	1990 Toyota Camry
3	1994 Oldsmobile Cutlass
4	1992 Honda Accord
5	1992 Buick Century
6	1994 Chevrolet Full Size C/K 1500 Pickup
7	1993 Ford Taurus
8	1994 Dodge Caravan
9	1994 Saturn SL
10	1992 Chevrolet Blazer

TYPES OF THEFT & TRENDS

- Thefts of Opportunity – It remains that many autos are stolen because the auto was left unattended with keys left in them.
- Use of counterfeit cashier and payroll checks to purchase vehicles from a private party.
- Gangs stripping cars for profit.
- Identity theft. 1) Use of another's identity to fraudulently purchase or lease a new or used vehicle, or 2) Thieves use personal information found within a stolen vehicle for identity theft purposes.
- Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) switching.
- Increased thefts from auto dealer's sales lots. These cases typically involve either a customer not returning from a test drive or a dealer noticing a vehicle missing from inventory when inventory is checked. Dealerships fail to account for keys to cars on the sales lots.
- Increased theft of high-priced luxury vehicles and SUVs.

- Use of stolen vehicles as a commodity for purchasing drugs.
- Increased incidents where the perpetrator is a friend or a relative who took the vehicle without permission.
- "Dope Rentals" – Offender claims to have "rented" the car in exchange for controlled substances.
- Auto thefts that tie in with burglaries in which vehicles that were parked at homes were used as a moving van.

PROFILE OF PERPETRATORS

The profile of auto thieves has not changed significantly. There are generally two types of motor vehicle thieves; opportunists and professionals.

- Young males in their 20's taking advantage of crimes of opportunity. This includes taking vehicles when no one is around and the keys are left in the ignition, as well as taking vehicles that are running or warming up in the cold weather.
- Perpetrator who needs a vehicle for transportation to ride across town; locates a vehicle with the keys in the ignition, and takes it to his or her destination. In a number of cases, the perpetrator has continued to use the stolen vehicle as his or her mode of transportation, often disguising the vehicle with stolen license plates or placing some type of temporary license on the vehicle to avoid detection.
- Thieves on a crime spree. They will steal a vehicle drive it somewhere, drop it off, and steal another vehicle and so on.
- Perpetrator stealing motor vehicles for a living and later selling the vehicle or its component parts.
- Person or persons stealing the vehicles often obtain the vehicle on behalf of another criminal, who then facilitates in the later transfer or cutting up of the vehicle.
- An organized group of individuals led by "habitual offenders" who steal cars along with their associated crimes such as the use of counterfeit cashier checks and payroll checks to purchase vehicles.
- In some cases where the perpetrator was identified, it was learned that they are often paid in drugs. If they are paid in cash, they often use the money to support a drug habit.
- Juvenile "joyrider".
- Juvenile affiliated with a gang or gang initiation.

TYPES OF AUTO THEFT PREVENTION PROGRAMS FUNDED

Grant applications are solicited from county attorney's offices, law enforcement agencies, neighborhood and community organizations, and business organizations. Priority is given to proposed projects that 1) establish or enhance a collaborative effort between two or more agencies, 2) include counties or regions with the greatest rates of automobile theft, 3) employ proven or promising strategies that reduce the incidence of automobile theft, or 4) address automobile theft that is perpetrated as part of a criminal enterprise.

Applications may be submitted for the following types of projects:

1. Training (criminal justice, citizen and business, etc.)
2. Public Education (public meetings, literature, public service announcements, neighborhood and business watch promotions, etc.)
3. Programs designed to improve or expand the resources of existing auto theft prevention, investigation, apprehension, or prosecution activities.
4. Multi-Jurisdictional projects combining the resources of different agencies in the task force approach to combat auto theft.
5. Long-term specialized training to further the expertise of auto theft investigators or prosecutors.

PROGRAM RESULTS

The Auto Theft Prevention grants were funded for the 24 month period of July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2007. Funded projects include six law enforcement agencies, five county attorney offices, two criminal justice agencies, and three non-profit organizations. Grantees and grant amounts are listed in the Appendix.

Grant recipients complete statistical and narrative reports on a quarterly basis. The following statistics are generated from reports from six law enforcement agencies and five county attorney offices over the 18 month period of January 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Placing specially trained law enforcement officers in the field to focus on auto theft criminals is the most effective method of reducing thefts.

Law Enforcement Statistics:

- Number of Vehicles reported stolen: 10,784
- Number of vehicles recovered: 7,729
- Number of vehicles processed for evidence: 2,149
- Number of vehicle theft investigations initiated: 6,542
- Number of vehicle theft arrests: 1,609
- Number of non auto theft related arrests generated by auto theft grant activities: 141

PROSECUTION

Prosecution and conviction of automobile thieves is one of the most important means of breaking vehicle theft rings and reducing the economic incentives of vehicle theft. Assigning a special prosecutor to handle auto theft cases is an effective method in achieving convictions.

Metro-area auto theft prosecutors as well as a representative from the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) meet quarterly to share information about defendants with cases in multiple counties, caseloads, procedures and techniques, and trends they are seeing in their jurisdictions.

Prosecution Statistics

- Number of cases referred:
 - Vehicle Theft Only – Adult 1,342
 - Vehicle Theft Only – Juvenile 982*
 - Vehicle Theft with related charges – Adult 301
 - Vehicle Theft with related Charges - Juvenile 121*
- Number of cases charged 1,967
- Number of convictions 1,306
- Number of defendants:
 - Sent to Prison 228
 - Sent to Jail 574
 - Alternative Sentences 497**

* Juvenile statistics from Dakota County not included.

** Juveniles are not sent to prison or jail, thus all of their sentences would be considered "alternative sentences."

Cases:

The following is an example of some of the cases the prosecutors see:

- An adult female was charged in a four count complaint. She was charged with Assault of a Peace Officer, 2nd Degree Refusal, Motor Vehicle Theft, and Driving after Revocation. She admitted the felony Assault of a Peace Officer and 2nd Degree Refusal, for which she was sentenced; the other two counts were dismissed. The Motor Vehicle Theft charge was dismissed because the owner of the vehicle refused to sign the car as stolen after it was returned to him.
Beltrami County Attorney's Office
- Two cases involved the same defendant who stole vehicles from car dealerships. The defendant would test drive the vehicle and then drive out of the lot in front of the salesman. In one case, he wasn't found until two weeks later. The OnStar system, located in the vehicle, helped the police locate the vehicle. In the other case, he was arrested about two hours later.
Anoka County Attorney's Office
- A defendant was charged with stealing two vehicles and attempting to steal another vehicle in a two-day period. The perpetrator first attempted to steal a vehicle from a grocery store but witnesses saw him, so he fled. Then he stole a truck with a trailer attached, dumped it in a bar parking lot and stole another vehicle from that location. Police eventually arrested him in the stolen vehicle. The perpetrator admitted to stealing the two vehicles and attempting to steal another. He also admitted to taking other vehicles. Based on his criminal record and the current offenses, he's looking at spending some time in prison.
Anoka County Attorney's Office
- This defendant has an exceptionally prolific history of committing motor vehicle theft and related offenses, being caught in five stolen vehicles during the first quarter of 2006 alone, and yet another on December 29, 2005. Four of the incidents occurred between January 11, 2006 and January 20, 2006. All six vehicles involved in the incidents were Honda Civics and all had peeled steering columns. The defendant was only 12 years old when he committed all of these offenses.

Four of the incidents occurred in Hennepin County, and the other two occurred in Wright and Ramsey Counties. Two of the incidents included fleeing police in the vehicles, including the Wright County incident, in which he fled police driving a Civic going one hundred miles per hour just outside the city limits of Big Lake.

The defendant's friend, a 15 year old male was with him during most of the incidents. Both have identified themselves to police as being members of the Purple Brothers Asian street gang.

On March 28, 2006 the defendant admitted several charges stemming from several of the incidents, and that remaining charges were dismissed as part of a

plea negotiation. The defendant was adjudicated delinquent, placed on probation, ordered to attend school and to abstain from drugs and alcohol, to commit no new offenses – especially motor vehicle related offenses, and given a ten month out-of-home placement in the Intensive Day Treatment (IDT) program at Woodland Hills in Duluth.

TRENDS OBSERVED - there has been an increase in Asian autos being stolen and the thefts committed by a relatively small number of actors. Asian gangs appear to be associated with this trend. The Hennepin County Attorney's Office is aggressively prosecuting these cases, and are using Spriegl evidence in the petitions so judges are made aware of the similarities of methods used for crimes committed by repeat auto theft defendants.

The number of defendants chased in police pursuits who abandon their stolen vehicles while the vehicle is still in motion appears to be rising; the abandoned vehicles often crash, damaging the vehicles and other property. Currently, there is no law against abandoning a moving vehicle while fleeing police.

Hennepin County Attorney's Office

- This case involves multiple vehicles and multiple defendants traveling across state lines. Five defendants were involved in multiple incidents during late April 2006 in which they went to rural Baldwin, Wisconsin and neighboring communities stealing multiple vehicles and tampering with other vehicles in close proximity to Interstate 94. They brought the vehicles back to St. Paul where they used the cars to support their trade of methamphetamine and other stolen cars. Through collaboration and extensive investigations Ramsey County was able to prosecute multiple defendants.

Ramsey County Attorney's Office

- A complex VIN Flip prosecution was the case against one defendant. On June 7 2006, the defendant was arrested for driving a stolen red 1990 Acura Integra in St. Paul. The vehicle was stolen from Brooklyn Park approximately a week earlier. At the time that the defendant was driving the vehicle, there were no license plates on the car and the VIN plat on the dash was stripped. Various other VINS located on the vehicle all were identified belonging to multiple other vehicles. Also, multiple items of varying identities of others were found in the vehicle. With a thorough investigation and confrontation of the defendant, the defendant admitted he knew the car was stolen and the VINS had been "flipped". The defendant has an extensive criminal history involving car thefts over the past six years.

Ramsey County Attorney's Office

- An adult male was apprehended by St. Paul Police due to driving a new Dodge Charger with a Denny Hecker Dealer label and no visible permit or license plate. The defendant's convoluted story tipped officers to look more closely at the VIN on the car. The car was freshly stolen from a dealership outside of Omaha, Nebraska in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Police then found Nebraska documents and

other license plates for Minnesota dealerships in the car. The prosecution of this case required coordination between St. Paul, Minnesota and Iowa.

Ramsey County Attorney's Office

- When multiple incidents in a short period of time occurred in Ramsey County, coordination of investigations between Ramsey County Sheriff's Office and St. Paul Police supplemented by investigations in Rochester, Minnesota, brought an end to these transactions. After Ramsey County devoted extensive investigation into these transactions and charged crimes with venue in Ramsey County, Ramsey County was able to refer strong cases for Rochester-Olmstead County, and Washington County and Anoka County.

The Defendants scheme involved opening a checking account with \$5 cash in violation of his probation terms and court order from Brown County. He then proceeded to obtain a series of expensive vehicles from multiple dealerships in Rochester and Dakota County before arriving in St. Paul. Once in St. Paul, he appear at a dealership in a 2006 Hummer from Inver Grove Heights and schemed possession from the St. Paul dealership of a 2006 Dodge Ram leaving the Hummer behind. He then went to a White Bear Lake Dealership in the Dodge Ram and schemed the dealership out of a Lincoln Navigator leaving behind the Dodge Ram. But his scheme included more than new, expensive vehicles. He further schemed a motorcycle from another dealership in White Bear Lake. The entire case folded with his apprehension in Maplewood while he was in possession of a new motor home from and Anoka dealership and having acquired a boat, trailer and motor from a dealership in Washington County.

Ramsey County Attorney's Office

COMMUNITY AUTO THEFT PREVENTION

As important as law enforcement officers and assistant prosecutors are in responding to auto thefts, any effort against auto theft must include the prevention activities of non-profit community groups. These groups provide valuable "street" information to law enforcement teams which leads to arrests or vehicle recoveries.

The non-profit groups hold block club meetings to teach residents how to prevent auto theft, distribute materials (flyers or newsletters) regarding auto theft prevention. These activities are primarily responsible for increasing neighborhood awareness of auto theft and provide a pipeline of information to law enforcement teams.

Statewide Media Campaign

The Anti-Vehicle Crime Association of Minnesota (AVCAM) is a non-profit group composed of law enforcement, insurance companies, and the National Insurance Bureau (NICB) which provides training and assistance to law enforcement throughout

Minnesota. AVCAM also provides information and educational materials to the public in an effort to reduce vehicle crimes.

AVCAM launched its Statewide Media Campaign for 2006-2007 with the primary objective to provide vehicle theft prevention information and to raise awareness of the HEAT (Help Eliminate Auto Theft) line (1-800-359-HEAT).

These objectives were accomplished through a variety of media outlets including:

- A billboard was placed at the intersection of Snelling & Como during the State Fair to remind fair goers to lock their car and take their keys.
- The State Patrol was given packs of baseball-like cards noting the top five vehicles stolen in Minnesota; the cards were handed out by Troopers during the State Fair.
- AVCAM tips were seen in 262 newspapers on twelve different weeks. Most of the papers were weekly and community publications, but there were plenty of daily newspapers as well.
- A mailing of two different lenticular (3D) full color image posters were mailed to law enforcement agencies, colleges and universities, malls, parking ramps, and major businesses across the state for display.
- Two radio commercials were produced and on the air in 80 radio stations across Minnesota. Almost 300 radio stations received a news story about vehicle theft prevention as well as the news story script and a sound bite from AVCAM. Spots were aired in the morning and afternoon drives during news reports.

AVCAM Viewer

AUTO THEFT PREVENTION PROGRAM IMPACT

It is difficult to measure the overall impact of the Minnesota Auto Theft Prevention Program due to the nature of auto theft. Auto theft is often a "crime of opportunity"; most vehicles are stolen with keys left in the ignition. In most cases the perpetrator is not found with the stolen vehicle in his/her possession. The criminal justice system response to auto theft reports is generally a low priority for a number of reasons: 1) often the vehicle is recovered (although it may be damaged), 2) it is difficult to locate and process evidence that will promptly and accurately lead to a suspect, and 3) diminished resources results in property crimes receiving less attention.

Given the nature of auto theft a successful program involves:

- Prevention through public education and awareness.
- Deterrence through bait vehicle, and "running sting" operations.
- Investigation and increased collection/processing of evidence.

- Prosecution and aggressive sentencing for repeat offenders.
- Law enforcement and community partnerships.

Statewide and program data would lead us to believe that we are achieving success.

Offenses are "cleared" by arrest or solved when at least one person is arrested, charged and referred for prosecution. In Minnesota during 2006, there was a clearance rate of 16% for motor vehicle theft; at the national level the rate was 12%.

While results have been significant over the past ten years, an even greater impact is anticipated as we move into the future. Targeting funding to parts of the state that experience higher than average levels of auto theft appears to be working. In addition, after ten years programs are using results to identify "what works," and best practices are now being employed throughout the state.

APPENDIX

**GRANT RECIPIENTS
July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2007**

Grant Recipient	Type of Program	Grant Amount
Anoka & Washington County Attorney's	Prosecution	\$228,933
Anti-Vehicle Crime Association of Minnesota	Statewide Media	\$175,000
Anti-Vehicle Crime Association of Minnesota	Statewide Training	\$29,450
City of Bemidji and Beltrami County	Law Enforcement	\$289,333
Bloomington Police Department	Law Enforcement	\$45,000
Brooklyn Center Police Department	Law Enforcement	\$134,439
Bureau of Criminal Apprehension	Criminal Justice Forensics	\$299,400
Dakota County Attorney's Office	Prosecution	\$269,182
District Two Community Council	Community	\$29,621
Duluth Police Department	Law Enforcement	\$290,495
Financial Crimes Task Force	Criminal Justice Prosecution	\$182,977
Hennepin County Attorney's Office	Prosecution	\$432,597
Minneapolis Police Department	Law Enforcement	\$350,131
Pillsbury United Communities	Community	\$100,000
Ramsey County Attorney's Office	Prosecution	\$470,000
St. Paul Police Department	Law Enforcement	\$149,946
	TOTAL	\$3,476,504.00

Bohmert, Tamara

From: Hummel, Tricia
Sent: Wednesday, March 12, 2008 11:00 AM
To: Bohmert, Tamara
Subject: 2007 Auto Theft Prevention report

Tamara;

Attached please find the 2007 Auto Theft Prevention Report. I do apologize for its lateness!

Highlights for this year's report include:

- In 2006 there were 12,961 motor vehicle thefts reported
- This represents a 9% decrease from 2005
- Minnesota continues to experience a significant decline in motor vehicle thefts – a 28% decline compared with 1996
- This compares to a national decline of 11.9% over the same period
- Minnesota experienced a 2006 clearance rate (when at least one person is arrested, charged, and referred for prosecution) of 16%
- This compares to a national rate of 12%.

Please let me know if any further information is needed.

Thank you,
Tricia

Tricia Hummel
Office of Justice Programs
651-201-7320