



# Automobile Theft Prevention Program

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2014 Report to the State of Minnesota Governor and Legislature

Submitted by  
Minnesota Department of Commerce  
Fraud Bureau

## **Program Mission**

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.

## **Program Background**

The Automobile Theft Prevention Program was created by the Minnesota Legislature in 1996.

The program is funded by a surcharge collected from automobile insurance carriers that provide comprehensive insurance coverage issued in the State of Minnesota. The amount of the surcharge collected for the Auto Theft Prevention Program is \$.50 per vehicle for every six months of coverage.

The program utilizes this funding for a competitive grant process for activities that address automobile theft in the State of Minnesota.

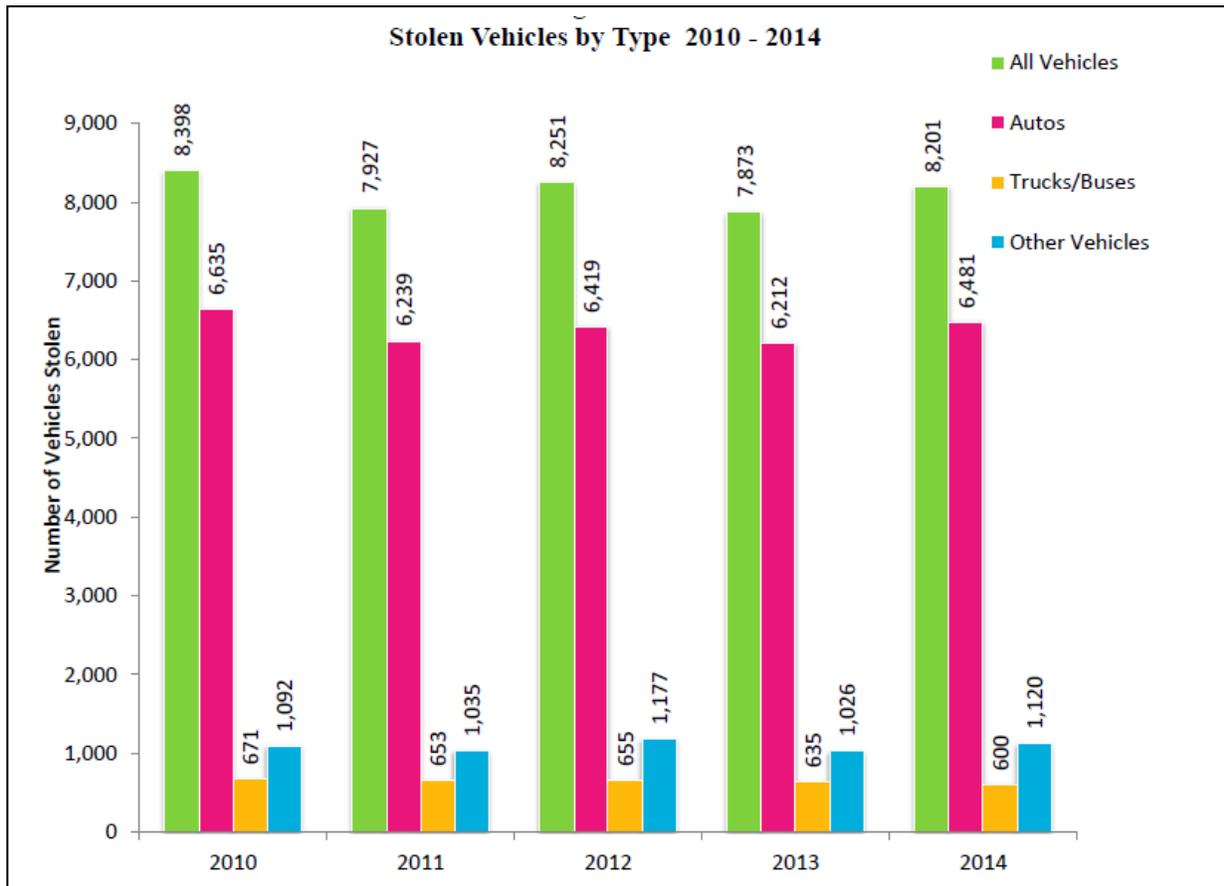
In July 2004, the Automobile Theft Prevention Program was statutorily transferred to the Minnesota Department of Commerce. The Department's Insurance Fraud Division has managed the program since 2009.

## **Extent of Automobile Theft in Minnesota**

- In 2014, motor vehicle thefts represented seven percent of the total property crimes reported in the state. On average 22 vehicles per day were stolen in Minnesota during the calendar year 2014.
- In 2014, 8,201 vehicles reported stolen in Minnesota were recovered, and 628 vehicles stolen in other states were recovered.
- The number of motor vehicle thefts in 2014 showed a small increase of 4.17% from the 2013 auto theft totals (7,783).
- Of the total number of reported vehicle thefts, 1,561 were cleared with the arrest of a perpetrator, indicating a clearance rate of 19 percent. Of the total arrests, 143 involved the arrest of a juvenile.
- Of the 8,201 vehicles reported stolen in 2014, 6,481 were automobiles, 600 were trucks or buses, and 1,120 were other vehicles such as snowmobiles or motorcycles.

## Minnesota Vehicle Thefts 2010 - 2014

Based on the 2014 Uniform Crime Report published by the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), reports of motor vehicle thefts showed a small increase (4.2%) from 2013 to 2014. As shown in the graph on the next page, reported vehicle thefts have fluctuated slightly from year to year, but have remained relatively unchanged between 2010 and 2014.



## Auto Theft Prevention Program

The following types of projects are eligible to receive funding through the Auto Theft Prevention Program:

- Training (criminal justice, citizens, business, etc.)
- Public education (public meetings, literature, public service announcements, neighborhood and business watch promotions, etc.)
- Programs designed to improve or expand the resources of existing auto theft prevention, investigation, apprehension, or prosecution activities.

- Multi-Jurisdictional projects combining the resources of various agencies in the task force approach to combat auto theft.
- Long-term specialized training to further the expertise of auto theft investigators or prosecutors.

## **Auto Theft Prevention Initiatives Funded in 2014-2015**

As part of the competitive grant process, the Auto Theft Prevention Program solicits applications from county attorney offices, law enforcement agencies, neighborhood and community organizations, and business organizations.

Priority in the competitive grant process is given to project proposals that included one or more of the following criteria:

- 1) established or enhanced a collaborative effort between two or more agencies;
- 2) included counties or regions with the greatest rates of automobile theft;
- 3) employed proven or promising strategies that reduced the incidence of automobile theft;
- 4) addressed automobile theft that is perpetrated as part of a criminal enterprise.

During the state fiscal year 2014 (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014), the Auto Theft Prevention Program provided grant funds totaling \$1,887,862 to 27 entities in Minnesota: 22 state or local law enforcement agencies; three county attorney offices; and 2 neighborhood, community, or business organizations.

During the state fiscal year 2015 (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015), the Auto Theft Prevention Program provided grant funds totaling \$1,784,000 to 25 entities in Minnesota: 20 state or local law enforcement agencies; three county attorney offices; and two neighborhood, community, or business organizations.

Below are the agencies that received awards from the grant program in the fiscal biennium ending June 30, 2015.

<b>Grant Recipient</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>FY 2015</b>
Anoka County JLEC	\$ 49,804.00	\$ 60,804.00
AVCAM	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00
Bemidji/Beltrami	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00

Bloomington PD	\$ 85,080.00	\$ 31,320.00
Brooklyn Center PD	\$ 75,316.00	\$ 90,037.00
Brooklyn Park PD	\$ 28,440.00	\$ 3,150.00
Crystal	\$ 30,135.00	\$ 200.00
District 2/5	\$ 27,847.50	\$ 27,847.50
Duluth PD	\$ 85,895.00	\$ 85,895.00
Eagan PD	\$ -	\$ 21,490.00
Golden Valley PD	\$ 47,325.00	\$ -
Hennepin County Attorney	\$ 220,138.00	\$ 220,138.00
Hennepin County Sheriff	\$ 47,080.50	\$ 47,080.50
Inver Grove Heights PD	\$ 25,150.00	\$ 18,900.00
Mille Lacs County SO	\$ 94,381.03	\$ 97,192.80
Minneapolis PD	\$ 167,986.00	\$ 175,405.00
MN State Patrol	\$ 72,000.00	\$ 72,000.00
MSP Airport PD	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 105,000.00
Oakdale PD	\$ 22,025.00	\$ 7,000.00
Olmstead County SO	\$ -	\$ 18,084.00
Ramsey County Attorney	\$ 273,523.00	\$ 278,039.00
Ramsey County SO	\$ 50,941.59	\$ 39,549.73
Richfield PD	\$ 26,300.00	\$ -
Robbinsdale PD	\$ 17,568.88	\$ -
Rochester PD	\$ 19,715.00	\$ -
Roseville PD	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
Saint Paul PD	\$ 157,486.27	\$ 157,486.27

Shakopee PD	\$ 24,525.00	\$ 7,000.00
Washington County Attorney	\$ 74,200.00	\$ 75,400.00

## **Auto Theft Prevention Program Impact**

The automobile theft rates for the five-year period 2010 through 2014 (most current data available) continue to show that the incidents of auto theft are plateauing. While the numbers have not declined, they are much lower than those reported in the 1990s and early 2000s, when stolen vehicles were more than double today’s numbers (17,983 in 1996) and arrest rates were far lower.

While the factors involved in the overall decline of auto thefts are numerous, the concerted efforts of the organizations receiving funding from the Automobile Theft Prevention Program are undoubtedly a contributing factor.

The financial support provided by this grant program continues to be critical in sustaining prevention and enforcement efforts for many city and county agencies in areas where the incidence of auto theft are the highest. It is unlikely that agencies would be able to sustain their auto theft initiatives without the support received from the Auto Theft Prevention Program.

## **Program Highlight - Anoka County Joint Law Enforcement Consortium**

The Anoka County Joint Law Enforcement Consortium scored a major success in 2014, apprehending an individual very likely responsible for more than 100 vehicle thefts throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

In early 2014, Coon Rapids Detective Chad Duckson noticed an increase of stolen vehicles from the shoulders of several highways and county road in the area. Many of these vehicles had been left at the roadside after running out of gas or stalling due to mechanical issues.

Believing the trend was not random, Det. Duckson placed a bait car in the area where many of the vehicles were stolen. Within days, the bait car was stolen and later tracked to a metal scrap dealer in Anoka.

A GPS unit was able to pinpoint the bait car’s location in real-time, and a camera inside the vehicle captured images of the thief. Officers confronted the alleged thief with the stolen bait car still on the bed of the tow truck with another stolen vehicle in tow behind.

After investigating the case, Det. Duckson determined that James Chester Jennings, 51, of Saint Paul, had used a flatbed tow truck to steal the disabled vehicles. He would then haul the vehicles to the scrap yard where he would falsify the VINs on the paperwork submitted to

the scrap dealer. Jennings appeared to have targeted vehicles that were 10 years old or older due to the limited reporting requirements needed to scrap older vehicles.

Police confirmed that 35 vehicles brought by Jennings to the scrap yard were stolen, and they suspect Jennings may have stolen 143 total.

In March 2014, Jennings pleaded guilty to multiple counts of theft and was sentenced to 45 months in prison.

For his efforts on this case, Det. Duckson received the “Investigator of the Year Award” from the Tri-County Investigators Association.

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