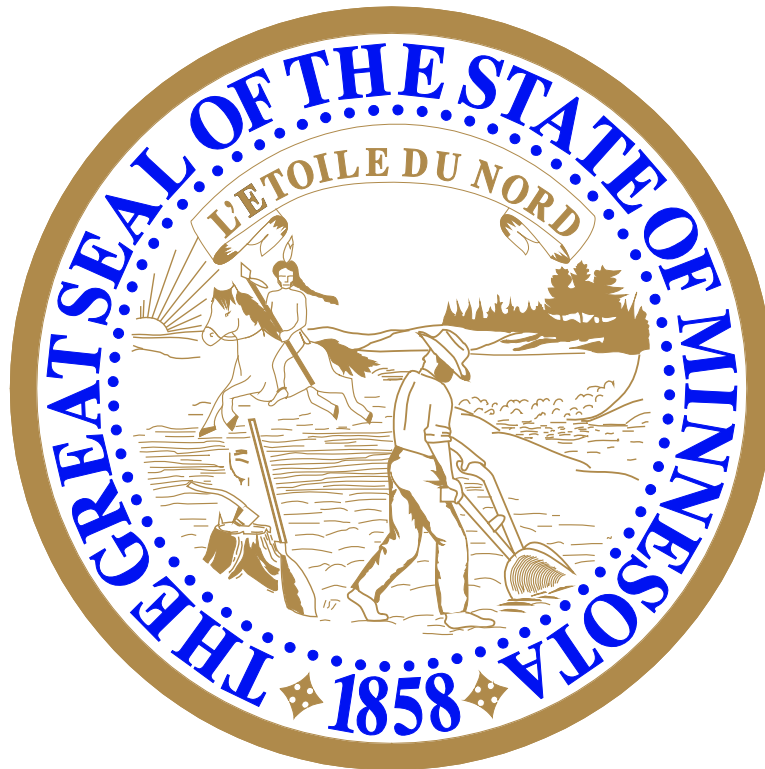


# Auto Theft Prevention Grant Program



**Report to the State of Minnesota,  
Governor and Legislature**

**January 2011**

## **Program Mission**

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

- Identification of critical law enforcement issues
- Auto theft education for officers and citizens
- Investigation and prosecution of auto theft suspects
- Collaboration between law enforcement agencies
- Prevention of auto thefts which result in lower insurance premiums for Minnesota vehicle drivers

## **Program Background**

In 1986, the Minnesota Legislature created the Auto Theft Prevention Program. This program is funded from a surcharge 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. Using this funding, the program makes money available through a competitive grant process for activities which address the problem of auto theft.

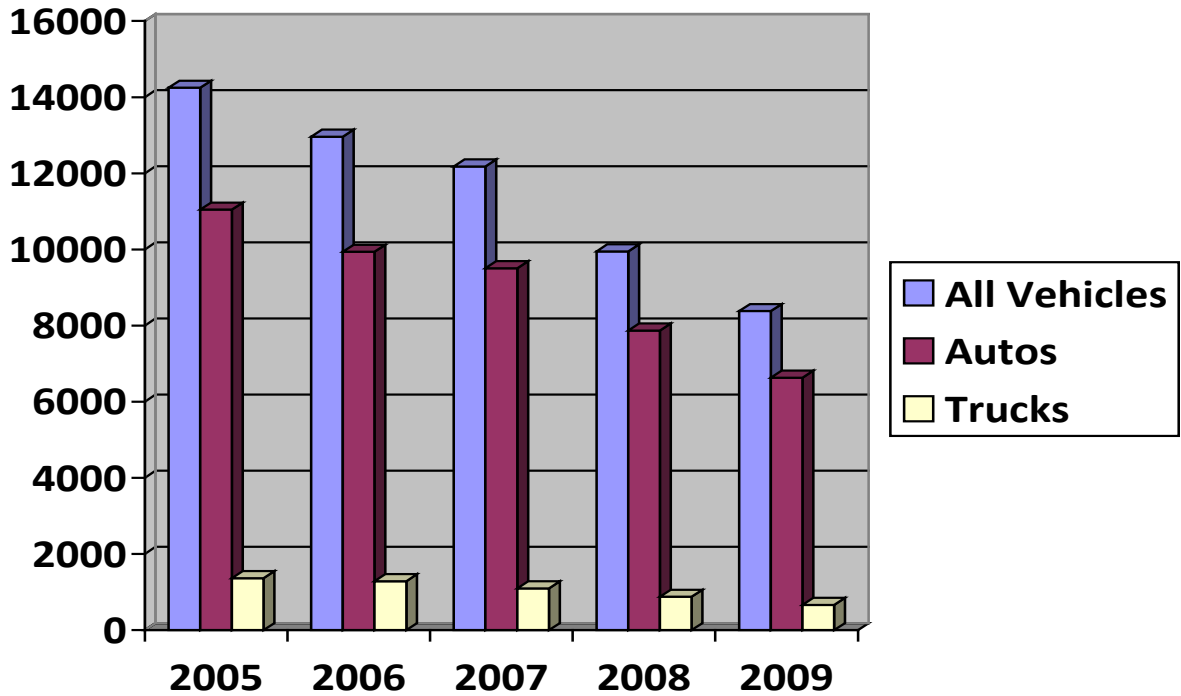
In July 2004, the Auto Theft Prevention Program was statutorily transferred to the Department of Commerce. The Insurance Fraud Division has managed the program since 2009 and is currently preparing for the next biennium grant cycle which begins in July of 2011.

## **Extent of Auto Theft in Minnesota**

In 2009, the number of actual motor vehicle thefts reported in Minnesota was 8,379, a 15.7 percent decrease compared to 2008. Motor vehicle thefts in 2009 represented 7 percent of the total of property crimes, a crime rate of 161 per 100,000 residents, and an average of 23 thefts per day.

Overall, Minnesota continues to demonstrate an effective strategy to counter motor vehicle theft. Based on the 2009 Uniform Crime Report by the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), the following graph illustrates the progress made in reducing Motor Vehicle Theft in Minnesota:

**Minnesota Vehicle Thefts - 2005 through 2009**



*Data extracted from the BCA 2009 Uniform Crime Report*

Although vehicle theft is primarily a crime of opportunity, perpetrators favor certain makes and models. Thieves target a wide range of popular passenger vehicles, often seeking parts from older models to sell on the black market; or the entire vehicle for scrap metal or cash.

***Ten Most Stolen Vehicles in Minnesota, 2009***

<b><u>Rank</u></b>	<b><u>Vehicle</u></b>	<b><u>Year</u></b>
<b>1</b>	Honda Accord	1994
<b>2</b>	Honda Civic	1995
<b>3</b>	Acura Integra	1995
<b>4</b>	Toyota Camry	1991
<b>5</b>	Chevrolet Pickup (Full Size)	1999
<b>6</b>	Dodge Caravan	1998
<b>7</b>	Ford Taurus	1999
<b>8</b>	Oldsmobile Cutlass/Supreme/Ciera	1995
<b>9</b>	Ford Explorer	1994
<b>10</b>	Pontiac Grand Prix	1998

*National Insurance Crime Bureau*



## Theft Trends and Enforcement

- A new trend in the theft of Honda cars is the theft of Electronic Control Modules (ECM). A local Honda dealer advised law enforcement that street racers reprogram the ECMs for higher performance.
- Increased association of motor vehicle theft and drug use.
- The recurring motivation for auto theft continues to be crimes of convenience, such as a need for transportation.
- Increased use of bait cars from the top list of stolen vehicles.
- Adult and juvenile males continue to be the vast majority of perpetrators of vehicle theft.
- Agencies continue to distribute “The Club” auto theft prevention device to victims of auto theft. Sophisticated auto thieves are able to defeat The Club. The AVCAM video “Auto Theft in Minnesota – From the Eyes of the Car Thief” shows that The Club being removed from an automobile by a former professional car thief.
- A licensed auto dealer was identified as a chop shop and drug trafficker.
- A license salvage dealer was identified as a chop shop and drug trafficker.
- Proactive jailhouse interviews of known auto thieves have resulted in the recovery of stolen vehicles and charges for other crimes.
- Many cases are worked in collaboration/participation with outside agencies sharing information and resources.
- Organized auto theft rings are associated with known street gangs.

## Profile of Perpetrators

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

- Perpetrators who need a vehicle for transportation to ride across town will locate a vehicle with the keys in the ignition and use the vehicle to drive to their destination. In a number of cases, the offender 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 will steal a vehicle, drive it somewhere, drop it off, and steal another vehicle and repeat the process.
- Perpetrators steal motor vehicles for a living and later sell 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 transfer or dismantling the vehicle.
- An organized group of individuals led by “habitual perpetrators” who steal vehicles by offering forged or counterfeit checks to purchase the vehicles.
- Some offenders have stated that they were paid for the vehicle theft with drugs.
- Juvenile “joy rider” and/or affiliated with a gang or gang initiation.
- Majority of perpetrators continue to be young males with criminal histories.

## **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, and 4) address automobile theft that is perpetrated as part of a criminal enterprise.

Applications may be submitted for the following types of projects:

- Training (criminal justice, citizen and business, etc...)
- Public Education (public meetings, literature, public service announcements, neighborhood and business watch promotions, etc...)
- Programs 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 increase the expertise of auto theft investigators or prosecutors.

## **Program Results**

Auto Theft Prevention grants are funded biennially from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2011. Funded projects include 11 law enforcement agencies, three county attorney's offices; three non-profit organizations; and one criminal justice agency. Grantees and grant amounts are listed in the Appendix.

Grant recipients complete statistical and narrative reports on a quarterly basis. The following statistics were generated from reporting agencies.

## Law Enforcement

The tasking of specially trained law enforcement officers in the field to focus on motor vehicle theft is the most effective method of reducing thefts.

### **Law Enforcement Statistics:**

<b>Documentation of Service</b>	<b>7/1/09-6/30/10</b>
1. Number of vehicles reported stolen	<b>4838</b>
2. Number of vehicles recovered:	<b>3731</b>
A. Number recovered with damage	<b>1021</b>
B. Number recovered without damage	<b>2710</b>
3. Number of recovered vehicles processed for evidence	<b>316</b>
4. Average length of time from theft report to recovery	<b>No Data*</b>
5. Number of vehicle theft investigations initiated	<b>2584</b>
6. Number of vehicle theft arrest:	<b>571</b>
A. Number of adults	<b>472</b>
B. Number of juveniles	<b>99</b>
7. Number of non-auto theft related arrests generated by auto theft grant activities	<b>51</b>
8. (optional) bait vehicle:	
A. Number of vehicle deployment days	<b>1218</b>
B. Number of activations	<b>84</b>
C. Number stolen	<b>28</b>
D. Number of arrests	<b>37</b>

*\*this data was excluded due to inconsistencies in agency reporting which lead the analyst to deem the data to be unreliable.*

### **Law Enforcement Methods:**

Jail interviews of known suspects and associates are a good use of time and resources and yield a high success rate of recovery and charges.

Mobile and stationary LPR's (License Plate Readers) are a cost effective tool to combat vehicle theft without requiring additional hiring of officers.



## **Police Department Accomplishments**

**July 1, 2009 through December 31, 2010**

**Minneapolis PD**—Completed 232,104 License Plate Reads (LPRs). These efforts resulted in the recovery of 13 vehicles valued at \$34,913. During this same period, the department deployed its bait car for 330 days resulting in 28 auto theft arrests. In 2010, the Minneapolis PD received an award from the Anti Vehicle Crime Association of Minnesota (AVCAM). This award recognized the department for their successful bait vehicle program which reduced auto thefts in Minnesota. A total of 265 auto theft related arrests were made with 2170 vehicles recovered.

**Saint Paul PD**—Auto theft investigations resulted in prosecutions of three males during the fall and winter of 2009. Staffing of auto theft details from November 25 to 28, resulted in zero auto thefts during the Hmong New Year's Celebration at the Xcel Energy Center. Use of the LPR system and patrolling of streets near Xcel Energy Center resulted in six stolen vehicle recoveries. LPR details deployed in December 2009 resulted in the recovery of several stolen vehicles. Additional LPR details in February and March of 2010 resulted in 29 vehicle recoveries. A total of 252 auto theft related arrests were made with 1886 vehicles recovered.

**Bloomington PD**—Deployment of the bait car resulted in an arrest of a suspect for auto theft and possession of burglary tools. In another bait car theft, three arrests were made and one suspect charged with auto theft. Following the arrest of three suspects stealing a bait car from the Mall of America, thefts of Honda's dropped off dramatically, potentially indicating those suspects may have been responsible for other stolen cars from the Mall. At least 23 suspects were arrested in or from stolen cars. The department deployed four bait cars during third quarter for 338 out of 360 available days. The bait car program resulted in nine activations in 2009 with seven suspects being charged with auto theft. A total of 19 auto theft related arrests were made with 49 vehicles recovered.

**Brooklyn Center PD**—In fourth quarter of 2009, 11 auto theft arrests were made resulting in five of six cases being charged by complaint to the Hennepin County Attorney's Office. In first quarter of 2010, seven arrests were made with all cases being charged for prosecution. Second quarter of 2010 resulted in 10 arrests. On May 16, 2010, officers from multiple

jurisdictions followed suspects as they broke into auto dealer vehicles in three cities. Two adult males were taken into custody. Third quarter resulted in 21 arrests, more than double the arrests of Second quarter. Hondas were the preferred target of one arrested career auto thief who is a member of Purple Brothers gang. A total of 58 auto related arrests were made with 126 vehicles recovered.

**Duluth PD**—In fourth quarter of 2009, Investigators developed close relationships with three Neighborhood Impact team members who work in plain clothes and operate unmarked vehicles. Their efforts had identified known auto thieves and monitoring of their activities. In fourth quarter of 2010, a joint investigation with the local Sheriff's department has uncovered a residence that is responsible for stealing vehicles and switching out the vehicle identification numbers (VIN) and then registering the vehicle with a false VIN. Duluth is experiencing a large number of vehicle license plate only thefts. A total of 26 auto theft related arrests were made with 81 vehicles recovered.

**Bemidji PD**—In third quarter of 2009, investigators handled a case of a stolen Chevrolet Tahoe that was found crashed in a rural area north of town. Investigators suspected that the owner filed a false report to his insurance company. The owner confessed to driving the Tahoe at the time of the crash and the insurance company stopped their payment to their insured. A fraudulent insurance claim was averted based on an investigation in which the insured reported his vehicle as stolen to his insurance company. The investigation resulted in the insured admitting to running from the scene of the vehicle crash and reported the vehicle stolen the next day. A total of 43 auto related arrests were made with 89 vehicles recovered.

**Shakopee PD**—This department purchased a Centurion Scout silent alarm system and a covert vehicle tracking system with GPS to be used to set up a bait car for deployment within the city. To inform the public about auto theft, a film was completed and aired on the cable access television show "Shakopee Police Department – the 411." A total of seven auto theft related arrests and 15 recovered vehicles were reported by this department.

**Washington County Sheriff's Office**—This agency purchased BSM Stinger equipment and a Stinger 1XRT BSM package for their bait vehicle. This equipment incorporates monitoring systems which automatically detect when a vehicle has been stolen and reports back to dispatch in real-time critical vehicle activity information, including the vehicles GPS position. Access to detailed Stinger information is restricted to the law enforcement community.

**Minnesota State Patrol**—The position of Auto Theft Prevention Trainer was created in January 2010. Thirty-two troopers were trained in OBDII reader, barcode scanner and other auto theft topics. Recovered vehicles for this period include ATVs, personal watercraft, trailers and passenger vehicles. Total Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) vehicle identification events for 2010 are 167. 206 vehicles were examined in 2010 resulting in 21 recovered vehicles.

## **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 representatives 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.

County Attorney's Offices have assigned prosecutors to motor vehicle theft prosecution; added a Community Outreach Specialist who makes presentation to driver education students, senior centers, and makes video presentations that are distributed in the community.

**Prosecution Statistics:**

<b>Documentation of Services</b>	<b>7/1/09-6/30/10</b>
1. Number of cases referred:	<b>1341</b>
A. Vehicle theft only (adult)	<b>740</b>
B. Vehicle theft only (juvenile)	<b>465</b>
C. Vehicle theft with related charges (adult)	<b>108</b>
D. Vehicle theft with related charges (juveniles)	<b>26</b>
2. Number of cases charged	<b>836</b>
3. Number of convictions	<b>419</b>
4. Number of convicted defendants:	<b>327</b>
A. Sent to prison	<b>65</b>
B. Sent to jail	<b>132</b>
C. Alternative sentences	<b>130</b>
5. Average length of time from charging to disposition	<b>124 days</b>

**Auto Theft Prosecutions and Dispositions**

July 1, 2009 – December 31, 2010

**Anoka County Attorney**— In third quarter of 2009, 17 juveniles were charged with auto theft. The majority of offenders were arrested in the eastern cities and are affiliated with Asian gangs. During fourth quarter of 2009, the Community Outreach Specialist created and printed 2000 auto theft prevention brochures to distribute at the Metro Transit Northstar Line Grand Opening event. Help Eliminate Auto Theft (H.E.A.T.) brochures and posters were also distributed to the 3000 community members who attended this event. Collaborative efforts with Anti Vehicle Crime Association of Minnesota (AVCAM) and Joint Law Enforcement Council (JLEC) have included public relations prevention campaigns, officer training, theft interdiction and proactive investigations. Convictions for this period total 159.

**Ramsey County Attorney**—During third quarter of 2009, 30 of 74 adult cases were charged. The 13 juvenile cases referred for charging represent a downward trend from the average quarterly juvenile cases charged in 2008 and 2009 of 22 cases per quarter. The number of convictions for the quarter was 18 adults and nine juvenile adjudications. The fourth quarter convictions consisted of 12 adults and six juvenile adjudications. Several of the auto thieves convicted are career criminals. The overall trend for this period shows a decrease in juvenile cases referred for charging. This positive trend may be due to the increased community involvement in reporting criminal activities to police departments and city and county attorney's offices. Convictions for this period total 180.

**Hennepin County Attorney**—Prosecutors reviewed 148 new auto theft cases in third quarter 2009 which resulted in charges filed in 73percent of the adult cases and 76 percent of the juvenile cases. The fourth quarter of 2009 resulted in charges in 73percent of adult cases and 57percent of juvenile cases out of 144 cases reviewed. For second quarter of 2010, 102 new auto theft case reviews resulted in 61percent of adult cases charged and 53percent of juvenile cases charged. Sixty five percent of adult auto theft cases during this quarter were referred by the Minneapolis Police Department. The largest number of suburban referrals came from the Brooklyn Park Police Department with six adult referrals. Third quarter of 2010 resulted in 157 new auto theft cases submissions with charges filed in 80percent of adult cases and 53percent of juvenile cases. Throughout the entire reporting period, the grant funded auto theft prosecutor continued to handle court hearings and trials for cases received in prior quarters.

## **Joint Law Enforcement Efforts**

**Anoka County Joint Law Enforcement Council (JLEC): July 1, 2009 – December 31, 2010**

The Anoka County JLEC is made up of the chief law enforcement officers and representative elected officials from Anoka County and its municipalities. The City of Fridley serves as the fiscal agent and oversees the operations of the task force. The JLEC created and hired a Crime Analyst in November of 2009. The Crime Analyst works with 11 jurisdictions within Anoka County. The role of the Crime Analyst has been to develop a uniformed auto theft reporting system. Other duties of the analyst include auto theft prevention training, data analysis, and coordination of auto theft activities within the JLEC. This agency reported 78 cases charged with auto theft and 67 convictions during this period.

## **Community Auto Theft Prevention**

**District 2 Community Council: July 1, 2010 – September 30, 2010**

District 2 Community Council activities included the dissemination of materials at eight block club meetings, three community meetings and two multi-family orientation sessions. All events offered tri-lingual theft reduction education materials and reached out to approximately 1800 citizens. Press releases concerning theft outbreaks and reduction were posted monthly on the District 2 website. Theft reduction information was in a weekly community newspaper which is distributed to over 30,000 homes. Other activities from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010 included a theft prevention newsletter sent to 26,000 residents, development of a theft prevention handbook, multi-lingual placard distribution to 320 auto owners and distribution of “Lock Your Vehicle” posters to several area recreation centers.

The council also collaborates with Saint Paul Police Department to address auto theft break-ins with community out-reach to block leaders in areas experiencing high incidents of auto theft.

## **Statewide Training and Media Campaign**

**July 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010**

### **AVCAM Training**

Anti-Vehicle Crime Association of Minnesota (AVCAM) is a non-profit organization formed to prevent vehicle crime through the Auto Theft Prevention Program. Members come from law enforcement agencies, insurance companies, and community organizations interested in preventing vehicle crime.

AVCAM Training conducted the following training and seminars:

- AVCAM representative tended a display booth at the Minnesota Crime Prevention Association annual meeting in October 2009.
- AVCAM hosted the fall seminar in November 2009 entitled “Cell Phone Investigations” in Bloomington, MN.
- NICB and the Minnesota State Patrol taught the Law Enforcement Auto Theft Training class to 12 officers in May 2010 in Mankato, MN.
- AVCAM held the spring seminar in May 2009 entitled “Auto Theft Immobilizer” in Bloomington, MN. 40 students attended.

Other major accomplishments for 2010 were the development of an AVCAM website at [www.avcam.org](http://www.avcam.org) and completion of an auto theft training video entitled “Auto Theft in Minnesota – From the Eyes of the Car Thief” The 33-minute video features a former auto thief, a police officer and an insurance company representative. Consult the website for information on how to obtain a copy of the video.

### **AVCAM Media**

AVCAM Media promoted the Help Eliminate Auto Theft (HEAT) line. The line is a toll free tip line (800-359-4328) offering cash rewards for information leading to the recovery of cars, car parts, and the conviction of auto theft. The H.E.A.T. tip line generated 18 tips in 2009.

The phone is answered by the Minnesota State Patrol dispatch in Marshall and given to the Special Agent with the NICB. After review, the information is passed to local Law Enforcement. The H.E.A.T. line is promoted by billboards, radio, and ads in Auto Trader magazine.

AVCAM Media contracted with Broadcast & Design Group of Edina, MN to design and place 30 billboards throughout the seven county metropolitan area. The billboards advertise the H.E.A.T. (Help Eliminate Auto Theft) program.

In January and February of 2010, H.E.A.T. radio spots were run as follows:

- 40 spots per week in the Twin Cities Metro area.
- 30 spots per week in the Rochester area.
- 522 spots per week in the Minnesota News Network (covering an area from Warroad to Albert Lea and Ely to Worthington)

An additional 362 radio spots were completed in second quarter of 2010 and 128 radio spots during third quarter of 2010. The spots were run on KDWB-FM (Contemporary Hit Radio) and KXXR-FM (Active Rock) and target men in the 18 to 34 age category.

## **Forensic Science Law Enforcement Support**

July 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010

### **Minnesota Bureau of Apprehension (BCA) Forensic Science Service**

Grant money was used to fund two positions in this agency – a Criminal Intelligence Analyst and an Employee Development Specialist. The Criminal Intelligence Analyst processes evidence for latent prints and the Employee Development Specialist schedules, plans and teaches the Auto Theft Prevention Latent Print Course.

The BCA Forensic Laboratory received a total of 202 auto theft submissions during this period, many of which involved latent print analysis. Ten suspects were identified through the processing of the evidence.

During second quarter of 2010, 71 law enforcement officers from 27 agencies were trained in Auto Theft Prevention classes. The classes were held in Clay, Scott, Benton, Winona and Cass Counties.

In third quarter of 2010, 76 law enforcement officers from 20 agencies received Auto Theft Prevention training in the counties of Olmstead, Sherburne, Wabasha, Stearns and Sibley

According to the BCA Forensic Service, the Auto Theft Prevention program has been effective and has resulted in a positive impact on the number of auto theft cases initiated and the quality of the latent print evidence submitted to their laboratory.

### **Auto Theft Prevention Program Impact**

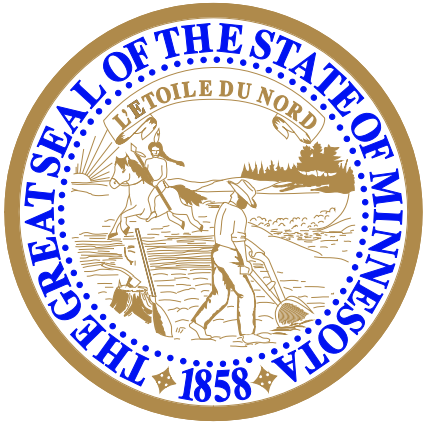
The combined use of law enforcement presence patrols, bait cars, automated license plate readers, officer training and targeted analysis of high auto theft areas appears to be having a positive impact on averting the actions of auto thieves in Minnesota. Despite implementation of new vehicle technologies by automakers, auto thieves continue to devise new and innovative methods to defeat auto security systems. Prosecutions by County Attorney's offices have the effect of removing auto thieves from the street where they once committed larceny and many other serious crimes.



In 2009, the number of actual motor vehicle thefts reported to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) in Minnesota was 8,379, a decrease of 1,569 vehicle thefts compared to the 2008 figures shown in the BCA Uniform Crime Report.

This downward trend in stolen vehicles is reflected nationally in the FBI's 2009 Crime in the United States Report which shows a decrease of 17.1 percent compared to the 2008 incidents of motor vehicle theft.

Based on a review and analysis of the quarterly Auto Theft Narratives provided by the auto theft grantees, the impact that law enforcement officers, analysts, forensic scientists, prosecutors, non-profit organizations and community organizations are having on auto theft prevention and prosecution is significant and measurable. Additional positive effects are being experienced through citizen education and targeted media campaigns. The Auto Theft Prevention Grant Program continues to be an important program which augments the enforcement and prosecution efforts in the Great State of Minnesota.



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February 4, 2011

***Thank you***

Thank you to the Grantees and their agencies in the transition of reporting from the Office of Justice Programs to the Department of Commerce. We appreciate your patience in adjusting to new requirements and the work your agencies do in preventing vehicle theft, apprehending suspects and prosecuting auto theft cases in the State of Minnesota.

We also extend a special thank you to the Office of Justice Programs, Jocelyn Van Knight for her continued guidance and assistance to our agency in preparing for the upcoming biennium grant cycle which begins July 1, 2011 and runs through June 30, 2013.

## Appendix

### Grant Recipients July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2011

Applicant	Type of Program	Biennium Award
Fridley Police Department	Law Enforcement	\$210,634
Ramsey County Attorney	Prosecution	\$469,508
Brooklyn Center Police Department	Law Enforcement	\$154,538
Minneapolis Police Department	Law Enforcement	\$296,830
Hennepin County Attorney's Office	Prosecution	\$249,946
Bloomington Police Department	Law Enforcement	\$205,752
Shakopee Police Department	Law Enforcement	\$31,828
BCA Forensic Science Service	Criminal Justice	\$170,269
Bemidji Police Department	Law Enforcement	\$252,000
Duluth Police Department	Law Enforcement	\$151,850
Washington County Sheriff's Office	Law Enforcement	\$16,754
District 2 Community Council	Community	\$28,562
Saint Paul Police Department	Law Enforcement	\$242,896
Anoka County Attorney	Prosecution	\$256,604
AVCAM - Training	Statewide Training	\$58,582
AVCAM - Media	Statewide Media	\$144,000
Minnesota State Patrol	Law Enforcement	\$94,371
Maplewood Police Department*	Law Enforcement	\$25,078
		<b>\$3,060,000</b>