



THE 2017 ATPA
ANNUAL REPORT

theAUTHORITY
Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority

CONTENTS

03.

LETTER TO THE
GOVERNOR

04.

WHAT IS THE PA AUTO
THEFT PREVENTION
AUTHORITY?

06.

FUNDING & CRIME

13.

PUBLIC HIGHLIGHTS

16.

TRAINING OVERVIEW

18.

STATISTICS

20.

CASE STUDIES

29.

BOARD MEMBERS
& STAFF

TO THE HONORABLE GOVERNOR TOM WOLF AND MEMBERS OF THE PENNSYLVANIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

Pennsylvania continues to be a national leader in auto theft prevention, with another noteworthy year in 2017. We continue to abate vehicle theft and are commonly recognized by other states as a model for public education and prevention. Since inception, the efforts of the Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA) have helped realize a 77 percent reduction in vehicle theft in the Commonwealth, compared to the national decrease of 50 percent.*

Last year alone, our grantee partners:

- Recovered more than 2,600 vehicles worth nearly \$26.5 million
- Convicted 806 individuals of auto theft-related crimes
- Obtained court orders for \$2.1 million in restitution to the victims of those crimes

This success is significant to every Pennsylvanian both in their quality of life and personal finances. That reduction impacts our community's safety and each citizens' individual insurance costs.

While some vehicles are stolen as a crime of opportunity for the thief to "get across town," many are stolen by complex, professional theft rings whose tactics often involve violence, financial fraud, identity theft, and international trafficking. Perhaps most importantly, many crime sprees begin with the theft of a vehicle, which leads to the dangerous and costly ripple effect of the subsequent crimes committed with that vehicle.

We are self-funded through an assessment of insurance companies that conduct business in Pennsylvania — we use no tax dollars. For every dollar assessed since inception, we have realized more than \$6 return. We take what we believe is very justifiable pride in that ROI!

You can be certain of our continued diligence to make a measurable impact in further reducing any threat to our collective safety and financial security that vehicle thefts pose.

We will continue to support our grantees, educate the public, and train law enforcement to detect and solve these ever-evolving crimes. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve Pennsylvania's citizens, and we thank you for your support.

03.

LETTER TO THE GOVERNOR

Respectfully,



Ronald W. Kosh
Chairperson

*According to the Uniform Crime Report maintained by the FBI and the Pennsylvania State Police. Theft rates from the FBI are only available through 2016 at the time of publication.

04.

WHAT IS THE PA AUTO THEFT PREVENTION AUTHORITY?

The ATPA is a statewide network of nearly 100 highly skilled police officers, state troopers, detectives, prosecutors, paralegals, and support staff. They work together to prevent, detect, and prosecute auto theft. Pennsylvania is one of the only states in the country to dedicate this level of expertise and commitment to fighting vehicle theft — and it's been a wise investment. The General Assembly created the ATPA in 1994. Since then, theft rates in Pennsylvania have decreased 77 percent, compared to a national decrease of 50 percent — with ATPA grantees recovering more than \$615 million in stolen vehicles and parts.





WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT AUTO THEFT?

Auto theft affects you. Even if you don't experience it firsthand, it impacts your safety and your wallet.

- When vehicles are stolen, **insurance rates increase**, and we all pay the price.
- Stolen cars are often used to commit **other violent crimes** that impact your community.
- If you leaves your mail, bills, car registration, work files, or other sensitive information in a car, you also become **vulnerable to identity theft and burglary of your home**.

06.

FUNDING & CRIME

FUNDING

\$6 RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The ATPA does not use tax dollars. Our funds come from an annual assessment of 365 insurance companies that conduct business in Pennsylvania. Through this funding, we award grants to investigative and/or prosecutorial units statewide, including the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), regional task forces, district attorneys, police departments, and a youth diversion program. The ATPA is guided by a board of directors and employs an executive director and a grants analyst. The ATPA continues to be an effective steward of insurance industry assessments, using only 4.5 percent of its funds for administrative costs, with the bulk of funds being devoted to investigation, prosecution, equipment, training, public awareness, and prevention. For every dollar assessed, we have realized a \$6.43 return on that investment in reduced theft rates and in the recovery of stolen vehicles and parts.

CRIME

SPECIALIZED SKILLS

Auto theft is only one aspect of vehicle crime. ATPA grantees have specialized skills to combat this issue; they know how to detect and solve crimes that range from title washing to insurance fraud, cargo theft to VIN altering, odometer fraud to carjacking, and more. Many crime sprees often start with the theft of a vehicle. Only investigators and prosecutors with unique training and experience can keep this wide range of thieves and schemes at bay.

PENNSYLVANIA MOTOR VEHICLE

THEFTS

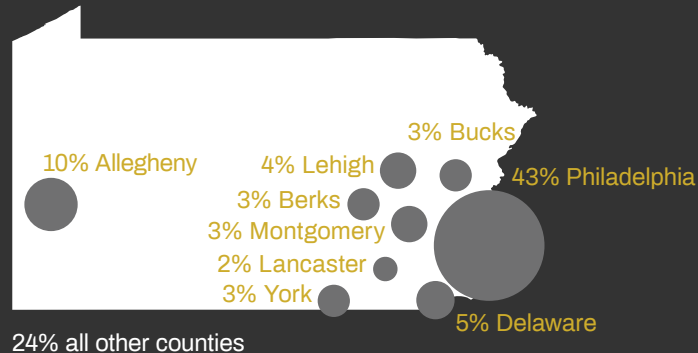
1994

54,153

2017

12,716

AUTO THEFTS BY COUNTY





GRANTEES

OUR GRANTEES SHARE AN IMPRESSIVE COMMITMENT TO

OUR MISSION

In 2017, they made 607 arrests and convicted 806 thieves, while recovering \$28.6 million in vehicles, parts, and restitution. Many municipalities have slashed their police department and law enforcement budgets, making the ATPA's support more important than ever. The ATPA provides grants for personnel costs and other expenses for detectives, prosecutors, and specialized support staff. In some cases, law enforcement agencies contribute matching resources. In other cases, the ATPA funds overtime costs to expand the capacity of the team. All of these models serve to multiply resources and streamline the ATPA's investigative-prosecutorial approach.

GOOD SHEPHERD MEDIATION PROGRAM

Good Shepherd delivers an ATPA-funded program, "Impact of Auto Theft," to first-time offenders referred from the Philadelphia District Attorney's youth aid panels and to juveniles who have been offered consent decrees, adjudicated for auto theft, or referred by a probation officer. Participants discuss the impact of auto theft and future consequences that they could face, along with ways to make positive decisions in the future. Seventy youth were referred to the program in 2017.



PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE

13 detectives from county and municipal police departments across the state (fully funded), 17 state troopers (grants pay overtime only), 4 state police supervisors (grants pay overtime and equipment only), and 1 clerk (fully funded)

POLICE DEPARTMENTS

PHILADELPHIA POLICE

- 8 police officers (fully funded)
- 4 detectives (fully funded)
- 6 division detectives (overtime only)
- Major Crimes Auto Squad (overtime only)
- Tow Squad (overtime only)

PITTSBURGH POLICE

- 2 detectives (fully funded)
- 2 detectives (partial overtime and expenses)

LANCASTER CITY POLICE

- 2 detectives (fully funded)
- 1 assistant district attorney (50% funded)
- 1 sergeant (50% funded)

DISTRICT ATTORNEY OFFICES

ALLEGHENY COUNTY

- Assistant DA (fully funded)
- Paralegal (fully funded)

DELAWARE COUNTY

- Assistant DA (50% funded)
- Detective (fully funded)
- Analyst (50% funded)
- Overtime for assisting officers

PHILADELPHIA

- Assistant DA Juvenile Division (15% funded)
- Assistant DA East Division (fully funded)
- Assistant DA Northeast Division (fully funded)
- Law clerk (50% funded)
- Investigator (70% funded)

LACKAWANNA COUNTY*

- Assistant DA (50% funded)
- 2 part-time detectives from local police departments (partially funded)
- Secretary (50% funded)

BUCKS COUNTY

- Assistant DA (fully funded)

LEHIGH COUNTY

- Senior deputy DA (50% funded)
- Secretary (50% funded)
- 4 detectives from local police departments (fully funded)

*Serves 10 counties: Bradford, Carbon, Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Sullivan, Susquehanna, and Wyoming





PUBLIC EDUCATION AND PREVENTION

One simple act can significantly reduce your likelihood of having your car stolen: locking it. But what sounds like common sense is not common practice. Auto theft detectives tell us that more than 50 percent of the state's stolen cars were left unlocked and/or with the keys inside. Our public education programs span the state but also focus on reaching Pennsylvanians in our highest crime areas during peak theft months.

13.

PUBLIC HIGHLIGHTS NO PUFFERS

The ATPA continued its annual statewide campaign to remind drivers to stop “puffing” — leaving cars left running, unlocked, and unattended. Puffer thefts are easily preventable but are identified by most ATPA grantees as a persistent problem. Drivers leave their cars alone to warm up or cool down, or while they run into a store or gas station — making their vehicles easy targets for opportunistic thieves.



Our 2017 anti-puffer campaign raised awareness through social media conversation and sent users to our website for additional prevention information. We reached more than 1.8 million Facebook users and more than doubled our Twitter followers. We also produced a humorous video to explain “puffing” — yielding more than 2 million video views on social media and reaching an audience of 1.2 million in 27 theaters statewide. The ATPA distributed ice scrapers with the “no puffers” message to law enforcement agencies across the state for distribution within their communities.



Fuel Your Fun!

WIN FREE GAS

[ENTER HERE](#)

FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN



GREAT GASOLINE GIVEAWAY

To draw attention to summer theft, the ATPA launched its second annual Great Gasoline Giveaway. The sweepstakes and digital marketing campaign reached a statewide audience, while also focusing on southeastern Pennsylvania, which has the highest theft rate. Through social media, email marketing, and a sponsorship with the Philadelphia Phillies, we relayed theft prevention tips and motivation to adopt good prevention habits.

The campaign yielded more than 8 million impressions on Facebook and nearly 2 million impressions on Twitter. We also reached hundreds of thousands of Phillies fans through radio broadcasts, social media, and email distribution. The campaign yielded 40 percent more sweepstakes entries than the previous year. Weekly and monthly winners received gas gift cards, and the grand prize winner from Pennsburg won a year's supply of free gas. We anticipate further sharing of our message through the winners, their friends and families, and their social media networks.

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF **CHIEFS OF POLICE** (IACP)

While serving as chairman of the IACP Vehicle Crimes Committee's Auto Theft Education Awareness Working Group, ATPA Executive Director Steven Wheeler spearheaded a report and action plan to educate law enforcement executives, their departments, and the general public about the connection between vehicle crime and subsequent violent crime. At times, these audiences and policymakers have become complacent about auto theft, not realizing its full impact. The report aimed to: define vehicle crime (a wide-ranging set of crimes from cargo theft to title washing, insurance fraud to carjacking, and beyond), and reengage audiences to keep these crimes in the forefront of enforcement and prevention. IACP praised the report and posted all materials to its website, notifying members of their availability and encouraging their use.

HELP US!

Preventing auto theft and other vehicle crimes can prevent major crime in your neighborhood. Take these steps:





16.

TRAINING OVERVIEW

AUTO THEFT AFFECTS EVERYONE

People sometimes tell us that auto theft does not affect them. This crime impacts everyone. More than 12,716 motor vehicles were stolen in Pennsylvania in 2017. Even without experiencing theft firsthand, you are touched by the ripple effect of insurance rates and violence.

TRAINING

Auto theft is complex and ever-evolving. It requires unique training and skill to stay current on theft trends and technology, as well as to teach patrol officers and prosecutors how to spot stolen vehicles, identify theft rings, and prosecute auto theft cases. ATPA grantees both receive and provide specialized training throughout the year.

FOR GRANTEES

ATPA partnered with the Northern Lancaster County Regional Police Department and the Cranberry Township Police Department to offer training on research and social media techniques. Grantees learned how to locate hidden data, analyze links, and quickly extract information.

BY GRANTEES

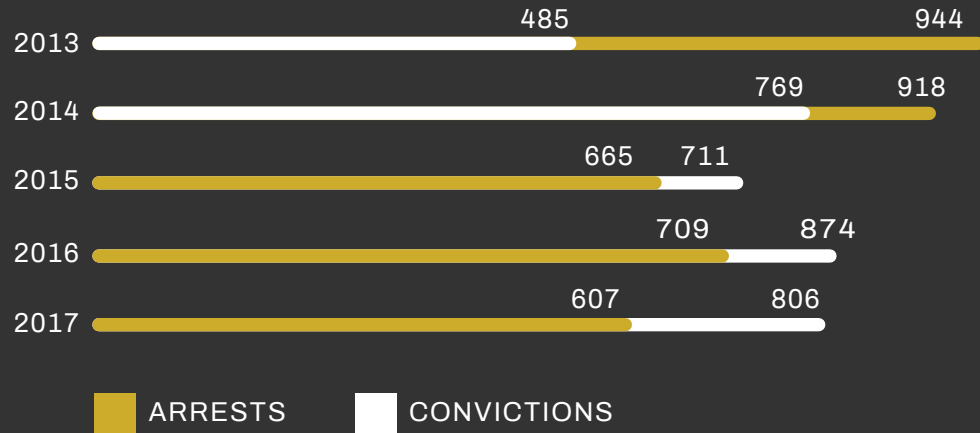
The Lehigh County Auto Theft Task Force routinely engages in training and outreach. This year, the Task Force instructed cadets at the Allentown Police Academy, taught an auto theft class for the Allentown Police Department's Citizens Police Academy, and presented a class at the Junior Police Academy in Bethlehem.

18.

STATISTICS

ATPA IMPACT

INDIVIDUALS **ARRESTED** AND CONVICTED



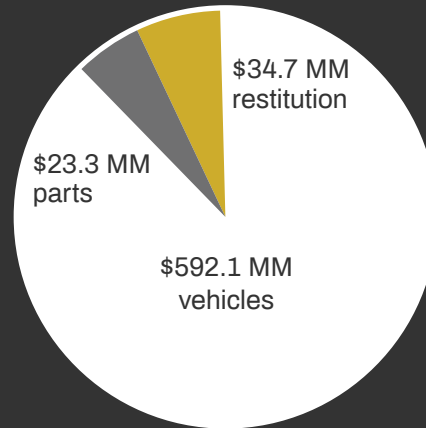
VALUE OF RECOVERIES

\$6.43

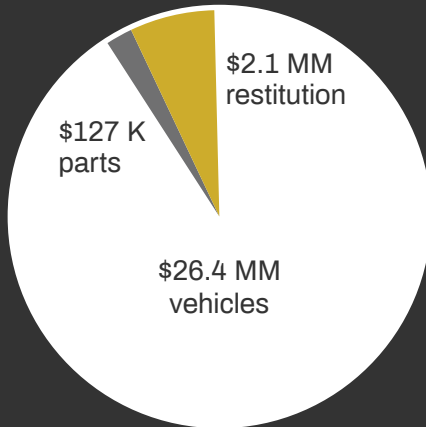
RETURN

ON INVESTMENT SINCE INCEPTION

INCEPTION



2017 CHART



TOTAL VALUE OF RECOVERED VEHICLES AND PARTS SINCE INCEPTION IN 1994

\$615 MILLION



20.

CASE STUDIES

PENNSYLVANIA

AUTO THEFT UNITS CASE HIGHLIGHTS



BUCKS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

SERIAL PUFFER THIEF

Authorities were first alerted to a serial puffer thief in December of 2016. A driver left his car running, unlocked, and unattended at a gas station while he ran inside to pay. When he returned, the car was gone. Surveillance video showed that the thief wore black and white sneakers. A couple of months later, the sneakers appeared on surveillance video again. This time, police responded to a Quik Mart in Bensalem Township, where a driver left his car puffing while he ran inside. Starting in March of 2017, the thief moved his activity to an apartment complex on Knight Road. First, the owner of a Toyota Sequoia left it to “warm up” in the apartment complex parking lot, only to return to find it missing.

Within the next week, two more vehicles left puffing met the same fate. A month later, in the same apartment complex lot, the thief carjacked a 71-year-old woman. He held a knife to her throat and pulled her from her Honda Accord. He closed the door on her leg three times before dragging her momentarily from the car as he drove away. About a week later, the victim’s Mitsubishi Galant was stolen overnight. She told police that a set of keys for the Gallant had been left inside the stolen Accord. Police stopped the thief in Philadelphia in that stolen Accord. They found the knife from the carjacking; DNA swabs from the knife and the two stolen vehicles matched the suspect’s DNA profile. He confessed to stealing the vehicles so he could drive to the Kensington area of Philadelphia to buy heroin. He was sentenced to three to six years in prison and was ordered to undergo a drug and alcohol evaluation and pay \$3,850 in restitution. The Bucks County DA reports that crimes fueled by drug and alcohol addiction are on the rise. From September through December, approximately 50 percent of its prosecuted offenders had identifiable substance abuse problems.

BUCKS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

CATALYTIC CONVERTERS

On March 15, the Lower Southampton Police Department charged a man with the theft of 43 catalytic converters from 43 motorhomes, U-Haul trucks, and campers. A joint investigation with Lower Southampton, as well as Bensalem Township, Hilltown Township, Bristol Township and the Bucks County District Attorney, revealed that, over the course of four weeks, the thief stole the catalytic converters by sawing them out of vehicles and then selling them to a Philadelphia scrapyards. Prior to his preliminary hearing, investigators intercepted a call from the defendant telling the other person on the phone that, if he made bail, he would steal more converters and sell them so he could afford to flee to California. Faced with all of this evidence, he waived his hearing and pleaded guilty. He was sentenced to three to six years in prison and was ordered to pay \$25,549.41 in restitution.





PSP EASTERN

TITLE WASHING

A PSP Eastern Auto Theft Task Force investigator took on the painstaking, detail-oriented work of uncovering a complex title washing scheme. Several of the cases started with the initial point of purchase and financing — where the suspects provided fictitious names and information. Several of the vehicles were then retitled in other states, making it even more difficult to track, and further “washing” the original lienholders from their interest in the vehicles. By washing or changing the titles, thieves could then sell the vehicles to fellow schemers or unsuspecting buyers. Multiple government organizations — including departments of transportation, vehicle financing companies, and car dealerships in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Delaware, and Florida — were affected by the scheme, with suspects stealing vehicles worth more than \$300,000.



PITTSBURGH

HEAVY EQUIPMENT

The Pittsburgh Police Auto Squad, PSP Western Auto Theft Task Force, and surrounding jurisdictions worked together to close several investigations and charge a shared suspect for theft of a skid steer, U-Haul trailers, and more. During a search of the suspect's house, investigators recovered attachments for the skid steer, as well as numerous items taken in a burglary of a self-storage facility and a motorcycle stolen from Butler County. The motorcycle was stolen after the owner listed it for sale, and the thief did not return it after a test drive. The suspect was previously arrested for stealing scrap metal and a trailer. He admitted to having a "very large" heroin addiction and had committed thefts to fund his habit.

LANCASTER

HANDLE FLIPPER

In the early morning hours of June 24th, a handful of Lancaster businesses experienced a rash of theft and burglary including the theft of a pickup truck. Lancaster Police auto theft investigators collected surveillance video from the surrounding area and spotted a man checking for unlocked door handles on eight parked cars. A detective recognized the suspect and watched the surveillance video as the suspect drove away in the stolen pickup. The Pennsylvania State Police located the suspect in the stolen vehicle on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. He was arrested and also charged with two additional auto thefts from Lancaster County. He was in possession of methamphetamine and multiple sticks of dynamite at the time of his arrest.

PSP - WESTERN

MISSING GATORS

Three John Deere Gator Utility Vehicles disappeared from a dealership in western Pennsylvania. Video footage showed the thief adjusting the surveillance cameras to conceal his activity. Investigators had a hunch that they'd seen this type of evidence before. On that hunch, investigators with the PSP Western Auto Theft unit checked on the status of a thief who had been in federal prison. They found that he had been released one month before the alleged theft. They also heard from investigators about stolen utility vehicles in Maryland and Virginia. The stolen vehicles had GPS tracking devices on them and were being hauled in a truck rented by a known associate of the suspect. Investigators traveled to Baltimore to conduct interviews and surveillance with the Baltimore Regional Auto Theft Task Force and identified three participants in a suspected theft ring. They also recovered three pieces of stolen heavy equipment from New York and Pennsylvania, valued at \$40,000. The lead suspect was arrested in Baltimore and extradited to Pennsylvania.

PSP CENTRAL

ATV THEFTS

The PSP Central Auto Theft Task Force was called in to help Bloomsburg state troopers solve several ATV/UTV thefts that occurred over several months in Columbia County. Investigators recovered 15 ATVs, an International Tractor, and a Ford Mustang — a total value of more than \$90,000. Six suspects were charged with theft and receiving stolen property; three of the suspects also face drug charges.





PSP WESTERN

HEAVY EQUIPMENT

The PSP Western Auto Theft Task Force, along with the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General, put a stop to a suspected fraud and heavy equipment theft ring that operated along the East Coast and Upper Midwest. Through the investigation, they identified more than \$358,000 in skid loaders, off-road sports vehicles, front loaders, and other equipment that had either been stolen or attempted to be stolen.

CHOP SHOP

The PSP Western Auto Theft Task Force charged two men with 222 felonies for chop shop violations, theft, trademark counterfeiting, and conspiracy involving the theft and retagging of 10 utility car hauler trailers. Investigators determined that the thieves had stolen the trailers, altered their vehicle identification numbers, and altered or forged their manufacturers' state of origin documents, and then sold them to an unsuspecting middleman in Indiana County. Investigators worked with a National Insurance Crime Bureau special agent, the New York State Police, and the New Jersey State Police to track down all of the trailers. One of the detectives recognized the theft pattern, and the team of investigators matched surveillance video and images from Facebook posts to identify the suspects.

PHILADELPHIA

STOLEN JEEP

The Philadelphia Major Crimes Auto Squad arrested a man suspected of stealing 40 early model Jeep Cherokees and Grand Cherokees from South Philadelphia. The vehicles were found stripped of their parts, loaded on top of bricks and jacks on the highway, with broken ignitions and door locks. The main parts taken were batteries, tires and rims, spare tires, A/C compressors, and catalytic converters. Investigators tracked down the suspect, and he admitted to stripping 23 Jeeps.



LEHIGH COUNTY

EAST COAST ATV

The Lehigh County Auto Theft Task Force spearheaded an investigation that uncovered an alleged ATV chop shop operation in Coopersburg. The Task Force assembled an unprecedented coalition of more than 25 highly trained auto theft investigators from across the state to conduct a 10-hour search of the suspected chop shop's more than 1,000 ATV or motorcycle frames, engines, and transmissions. Through their specialized training and assistance by the National Insurance Crime Bureau, the investigators were able to identify and source dozens of stolen parts by examining tampered, ground-down, or restamped vehicle identification numbers. The alleged chop shop operator was charged with more than 40 counts of chop shop-related offenses.

FINANCIAL

Fiscal year 2016 - 2017

Assessments	6,989,826
Interest earned	4,791
Miscellaneous	(88,260)
Realized loss on disposal	7,000
Total revenue	6,913,357
Balance carried over from prior year	2,456,019
Total funds available:	9,369,376

Program expenses

Grants paid	(5,892,041)
Grant reviews	(67,026)
Public awareness	(547,167)
Training	(28,960)
Total	(315,832)

Operating expenses

Personnel expenses:	(201,222)
Operating expenses:	(114,610)
Total	(6,535,194)

Net effect of balance sheet changes: 1,092,185

Year-end balance: 3,610,535

(to be applied to future grants and operational expenditures)

ATPA operated at 4.5% of the total assessments collected.



Ronald W. Kosh
Chairperson



Celeste C. Dodson
Secretary

Claims Manager — SIU,
State Farm Insurance



James Fitzpatrick

Chief Deputy Attorney
General, Pennsylvania
Office of Attorney General

29.

BOARD MEMBERS & STAFF



Frank E. Pawlowski

Retired Commissioner,
Pennsylvania State Police



Frank J. Noonan

Retired Commissioner,
Pennsylvania State Police



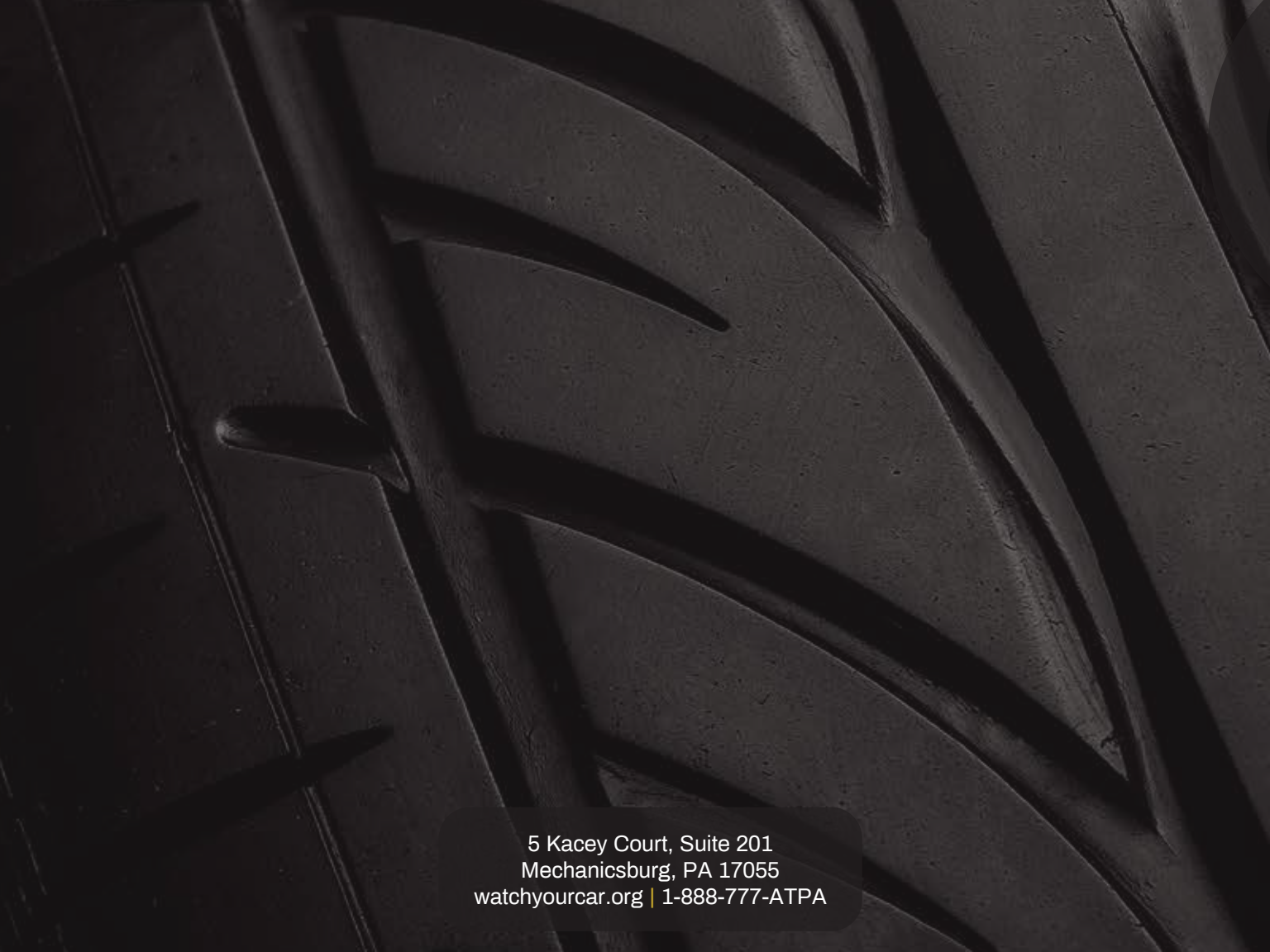
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