

2023

ANNUAL REPORT

Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority



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TO THE HONORABLE GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO AND MEMBERS OF THE PENNSYLVANIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

LETTER TO THE GOVERNOR 02

In 2023, as mirrored across most of the nation, we saw yet another steep increase in vehicle crimes, predominantly in Philadelphia. There was a 60 percent increase in auto theft from 2022 to 2023 across the Commonwealth, including a 92 percent increase in Philadelphia.

Last year, 34,116 vehicles were stolen in Pennsylvania. After seeing decades of declining vehicle theft rates, the Commonwealth hasn't experienced that many stolen vehicles since 2003. Criminals are using the threat of violence, as well as more sophisticated technology, to steal cars. Use of social media has brought another new dimension to auto theft, with the glamorization of these crimes in viral, global social posts like the "Kia/Hyundai TikTok Challenge."

While these tactics and statistics are distressing, we are faring better than other areas across the nation. More than one million cars were stolen nationwide – two every minute – according to the latest numbers from the National Insurance Crime Bureau. We are one of the few states that still has an organization like the Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA) to combat vehicle crimes. Since the ATPA's inception in 1994, we've helped reduce vehicle theft in the Commonwealth by 37 percent. While theft rates increased in parts of the Commonwealth last year, so did our grantees' work, with increased arrests, convictions, and millions in recovered vehicles, parts, and restitution.

The ATPA is a legislatively mandated, public-private entity that cannot and does not use tax dollars. Instead, the organization is funded entirely by assessments of Pennsylvania property and casualty insurers. Grants are made to law enforcement agencies based solely

on manifest need. The Authority's renewal of those grants is contingent on audits and results.

We work with our grantees and partners across the state and the globe to provide information and resources to attack vehicle crime. While some vehicles are stolen as a crime of opportunity, many are stolen by complex, professional theft rings, whose tactics often involve violence, financial fraud, identity theft, and international trafficking. We see crime sprees begin with the theft of a vehicle, leading to the dangerous and costly ripple effect of the subsequent crimes and serious, sometimes deadly threats to drivers.

You can be certain of our continued diligence in reducing the peril to our collective safety and security that vehicle crimes pose. We will continue to serve the citizens of the Commonwealth, support our grantees, educate the public, and train law enforcement to detect and solve these ever-evolving crimes. We are grateful for the opportunity, and we thank you for your support.



Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Ronald W. Kosh".

Ronald W. Kosh
Chairperson

03. WHAT IS THE PENNSYLVANIA AUTO THEFT PREVENTION AUTHORITY?

THE MISSION OF THE ATPA IS TO PREVENT, DETECT, AND PROSECUTE AUTO THEFT.

The ATPA is a statewide network of nearly 100 highly skilled police officers, state troopers, detectives, prosecutors, paralegals, and support staff who work together to prevent, detect, investigate, and prosecute auto theft, as well as recover stolen vehicles and components.

The General Assembly created the ATPA in 1994. Pennsylvania remains one of the only states in the country to dedicate this level of expertise and commitment to fighting vehicle theft. It's proven to be a wise investment.

Since its inception, the organization has reduced theft rates in Pennsylvania by 37 percent, with ATPA grantees recovering more than \$900 million in stolen vehicles and parts.

WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT AUTO THEFT?

Auto theft and vehicle crimes impact your safety, the safety of your community, and your wallet. Whether your car is stolen or not, vehicle-related crimes affect everyone.



- 1.** An increasing number of cars are being **stolen by force**, threatening the lives of the drivers and anyone else nearby.
- 2.** Stolen cars are often used to commit **other violent crimes** that impact your community.
- 3.** If you leave your mail, bills, car registration, work files, or other sensitive information in a car, you also become vulnerable to **identity theft and home burglary**.
- 4.** When vehicles are stolen, **insurance rates increase**. We all pay the price.

05. FUNDING & SKILLS



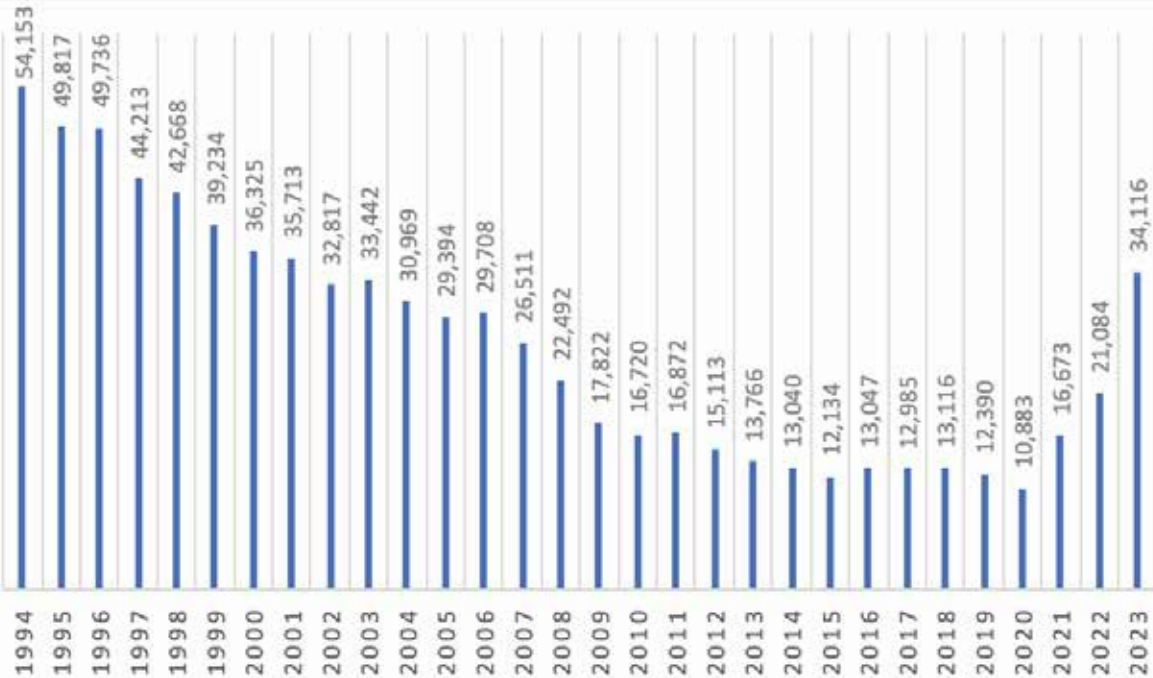
FUNDING

The ATPA does not use tax dollars. Funds come from an annual assessment of 297 insurance companies that insure Pennsylvania drivers. The funding provides grants to investigative and/or prosecutorial units statewide, including the Pennsylvania State Police, regional task forces, district attorneys, police departments, and public information campaigns. The ATPA team consists of a board of directors, an executive director, and a grants analyst. An effective steward of the insurance industry assessments, the organization uses only 5.1 percent of its funds for administrative costs. The funds are devoted to investigation, prosecution, equipment, training, public awareness, and prevention.

SPECIALIZED SKILLS

Theft is only one aspect of vehicle crime. Pennsylvania ATPA grantees have specialized skills. They know how to detect and solve crimes that range from title washing to insurance fraud to cargo theft to VIN alteration to odometer fraud to carjacking and more. Many violent 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. The ATPA is the primary provider of auto theft and vehicle crimes training in Pennsylvania. In addition to providing training for its grantees, it also provides training for police officers and prosecutors statewide and sponsors training programs conducted by the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators and the Pennsylvania Auto Crimes Investigators Association. ATPA grantees often serve as instructors and subject-matter experts for those training programs.

PENNSYLVANIA MOTOR VEHICLE THEFTS



From 2019 to present, there are an incomplete number of agencies reporting to the National Crime Statistics Exchange.

*Per Federal UCR through 2020; per PA UCR as of 2021. Current year is not considered final.

PENNSYLVANIA MOTOR VEHICLE

THEFTS

1994

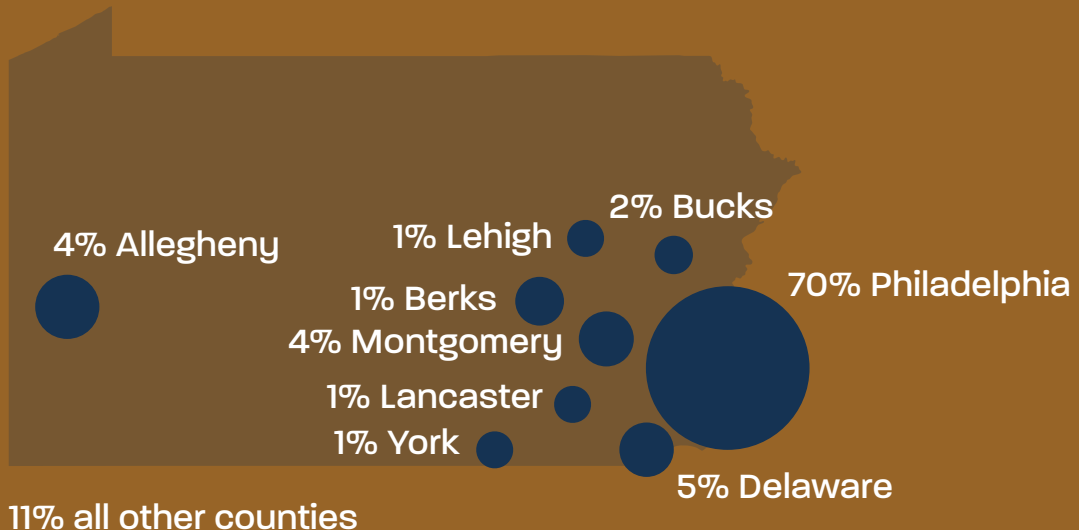
54,153

2023

34,116

As of 3/1/2023

AUTO THEFTS BY COUNTY





PHILADELPHIA

In 2023, the Major Crimes Auto Squad of the Philadelphia Police Department reported a 31 percent decrease in carjackings but a dramatic increase in overall auto theft, at 92 percent from 2022. Hyundais and Kias accounted for 58 percent of the total stolen vehicles in 2023, with 7,658 Hyundais and 6,070 Kias reported stolen. Most of these thefts were committed by juveniles to joyride or to use the cars to commit other crimes. This trend peaked in July and August of 2023, which coincided with schools' summer vacation period.

TOTAL STOLEN VEHICLES PER YEAR:

2019: 5,864 **2020:** 6,950 **2021:** 11,368 **2022:** 12,331 **2023:** 23,580

2023

GRANTEES

**OUR GRANTEES
SHARE AN
IMPRESSIVE
COMMITMENT TO**

**OUR
MISSION**

In 2023, ATPA grantees made 505 arrests and 1,053 convictions and recovered \$78.3 million in vehicles, parts, and restitution.

Pennsylvania ATPA grantees span the state and are awarded funds following an application and board vote. Funds are awarded based on need and on the grantee's plan for how the funds will be used. Grant renewals are contingent upon audits and results.

Many municipalities have slashed their police department and law enforcement budgets, making this support more important than ever. Grant monies may be used to cover salaries for detectives, prosecutors, and specialized support staff, as well as training and equipment.

In some cases, law enforcement agencies contribute to matching resources. In other cases, ATPA funds cover overtime costs to expand the capacity of the team. Funding models serve to multiply resources and streamline our investigative-prosecutorial approach.



PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE (PSP)

- 14 detectives from county and municipal police departments across the state (fully funded)
- 17 state troopers (overtime and equipment only)
- 4 state police supervisors (overtime and equipment only)
- 1 clerk (fully funded)

POLICE DEPARTMENTS

ERIE POLICE

- 1 detective (fully funded)
- Overtime for assisting officers

LANCASTER CITY POLICE

- 1 detective (fully funded)
- 1 assistant district attorney (50% funded)
- 1 sergeant (50% funded)
- Overtime for assisting officers

PHILADELPHIA POLICE

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

PITTSBURGH POLICE

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

DISTRICT ATTORNEY OFFICES

ALLEGHENY COUNTY

- 1 assistant DA (fully funded)
- 1 paralegal (fully funded)

BUCKS COUNTY

- 1 deputy DA (fully funded)
- 2 assistant DAs (fully funded)
- Overtime for assisting officers

DELAWARE COUNTY

- 1 deputy DA (50% funded)
- 1 detective (fully funded)
- 1 analyst (50% funded)
- Overtime for assisting officers

LACKAWANNA COUNTY**

- 1 assistant DA (50% funded)
- 1 part-time detective from the local police department
- 1 secretary (50% funded)

LEHIGH COUNTY

- 1 chief deputy DA (50% funded)
- 1 secretary (50% funded)
- 4 detectives from local police departments (fully funded)

PHILADELPHIA

- 1 assistant DA (fully funded)
- 1 special investigative unit paralegal (fully funded)

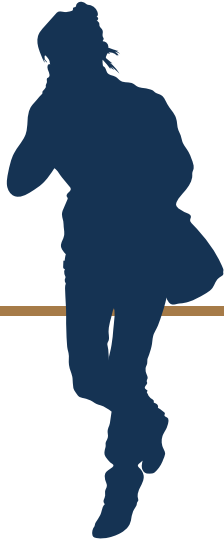


**Serves 11 counties: Bradford, Carbon, Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Wayne, and Wyoming

13. PUBLIC EDUCATION & PREVENTION



PART OF OUR MISSION IS TO PREVENT VEHICLE CRIME



Besides the grantees, the biggest allies in this effort are Pennsylvania drivers themselves. The simple habit of **locking the car and taking the keys with you** will significantly reduce the likelihood of having a car stolen. While this may sound like common sense, the data indicates that it's not common practice. ATPA grantees estimate that more than 50 percent of the state's stolen cars were left unlocked and/or with the keys inside.

CARJACKINGS ARE ON THE RISE

TIP:
PARK IN A WELL-LIT AREA WHERE OTHERS CAN SEE YOU AND YOUR VEHICLE



TO LEARN MORE AND VIEW OTHER TIPS VISIT WATCHYOURCAR.ORG



TIP:
PARK IN VIEW OF A SURVEILLANCE CAMERA WHEN POSSIBLE



TO LEARN MORE AND VIEW OTHER TIPS VISIT WATCHYOURCAR.ORG



DIGITAL ADS

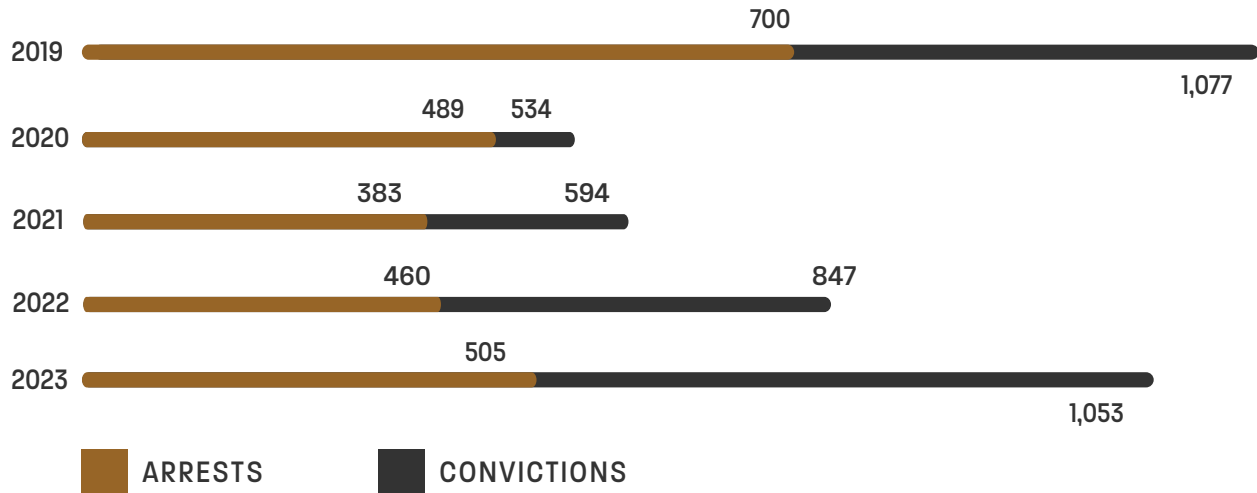
The ATPA continues to spread a simple, clear prevention message across the state, while also focusing on the highest crime areas. In 2023, it deployed custom digital education campaigns to reach the broadest audience, specifically targeting Philadelphia due to exceptionally high rates of carjacking and catalytic converter thefts.

SHORT VIDEOS



The ATPA placed video vignettes of safety tips about avoiding carjacking and vehicle crime on YouTube, social media, in-app advertising, and radio broadcasts. The awareness and prevention campaign generated millions of impressions to encourage car owners to stay vigilant. To further focus a prevention message in the hot spot of the greater Philadelphia area, the ATPA supported a sponsorship with the Philadelphia Phillies, reaching drivers through social media, email, and radio broadcasts. As part of the sponsorship, the ATPA provided community support to the Phillies school mentorship program, which helps educate and inspire local students to make good choices and realize their life potential. Through this sponsorship, the ATPA helped support four student trips from the school district of Philadelphia Gang Violence Interrupter program.

INDIVIDUALS **ARRESTED** AND CONVICTED

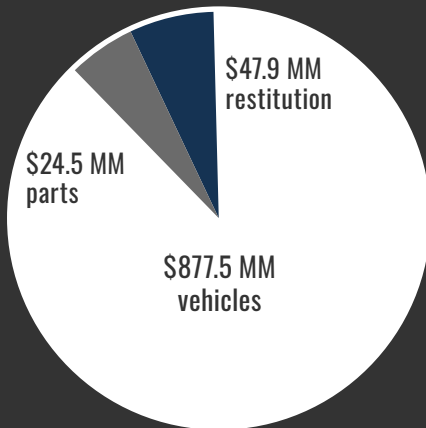


VALUE OF RECOVERIES

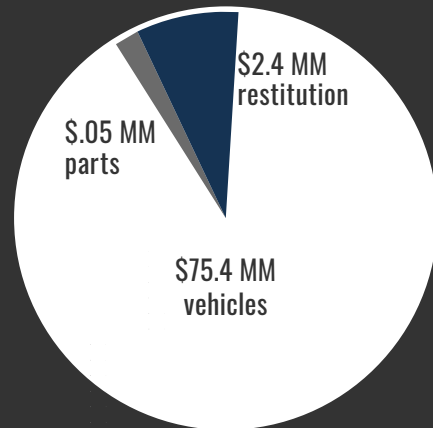
\$902 MILLION

total value of recovered vehicles and parts since inception in 1994.

INCEPTION



2023



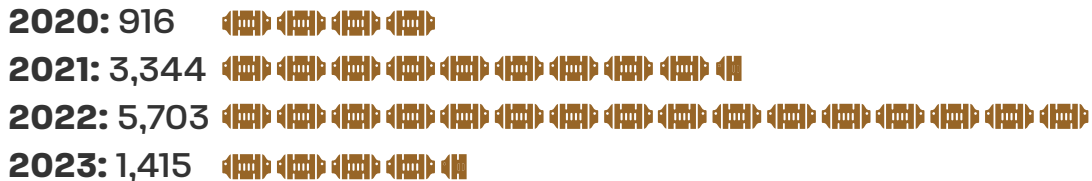
17. CASE HIGHLIGHTS

CATALYTIC CONVERTER RING

A grand jury investigation into TDI Towing of Port Richmond made a major dent in catalytic converter thefts. Once the catalytic converter theft ring was busted, investigators saw a 75 percent reduction in converter thefts in Philadelphia, with a total of 1,415 compared to 5,703 in 2022.

More than two dozen law enforcement agencies from across Pennsylvania and New Jersey were involved in busting the theft ring, including ATPA grantees with the Bucks County District Attorney's Office and the Philadelphia Police Department Major Crime Auto Squad. Investigators contend that the criminal operation brought in about 175 catalytic converters a week, totaling an estimated 27,300 of the parts, worth \$8.2 million. The district attorney charged 10 adults and one juvenile for their alleged roles in the theft ring that targeted victims in Bucks County, Montgomery County, and the Delaware Valley region.

PHILADELPHIA CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFT



SCRANTON OFFICER CRITICALLY INJURED IN LINE OF DUTY

Detective Kyle Gilmartin was the victim of a gang-related shooting in Scranton in January 2023 when suspects fired into the officer's unmarked police sedan, hitting him above his right eye before fellow officers returned fire. The suspects fled in a stolen vehicle and were caught by the Pennsylvania State Police after a high-speed chase. The events were another startling reminder of how violent vehicle crimes have become and of the relentless dedication of our grantees and partners. Gilmartin made a miraculous recovery from his head injuries, was released from a rehabilitation hospital, and returned home.

Earlier in the year, Gilmartin had wrapped up several impactful auto theft investigations, including a months-long investigation into the burglary of a car dealership involving \$250,000 in stolen property. The case allegedly involves a larger, out-of-state criminal theft ring.





KIA AND HYUNDAI THEFTS

Kia and Hyundai thefts continued to plague multiple regions of the Commonwealth. In the last couple of years, these vehicles became part of a popular social media challenge and were vulnerable due to their lack of engine immobilizers and basic auto theft prevention technology. Typically, the passenger side window is broken to allow access into the vehicle. The car thief then proceeds to dismantle the steering column, gaining access to the vehicle's ignition system. There is an app sold over the internet that a car thief can purchase for approximately \$300. With the use of a USB cord, the vehicle can be started and stolen in minutes. Several of our grantees organized community giveaways of free steering wheel-locking devices given by the cars' manufacturers.

TABLET THEFTS

An emerging trend being seen by several grantees involves theft by tablet. Thieves are hacking into modern car computer systems to steal vehicles in seconds. Investigators reported an uptick in Dodge vehicles being stolen without a key. Suspects also appear to be able to program a key and drive away with high-end, expensive sports cars. Thieves can learn these high-tech break-ins on TikTok and YouTube, where videos offer instructions on how to hijack certain cars.



FINANCIAL

Fiscal year 2022 - 2023

Assessments	8,240,000
Interest earned	17,426
Total revenue	8,257,426
Balance carried over from prior year	7,528,964
Total funds available	15,786,390

Program expenses

Grants paid	(7,226,729)
Grant reviews	(77,909)
Public awareness	(216,959)
Training	(5,568)
Total	(7,527,165)

Operating expenses

Personnel expenses	(268,143)
Operating expenses	(152,094)
Total	(420,237)

Net effect of balance sheet changes (2,372,653)

Year-end balance: **10,211,641**
(to be applied to future grants and operational expenditures)

The ATPA operated at 5.1 percent of the total assessments collected.

STAFF – **Steven R. Wheeler** | Executive Director & **Alissa Temperine** | Grants Analyst



Ronald W. Kosh
Chairperson



Celeste C. Dodson
Secretary
SIU Claims Manager – SIU,
State Farm Insurance



Scott P. Sherry
Treasurer
Associate Vice President
Personal Lines Claims – Auto,
Nationwide



Robert G. LaBar
Senior Deputy Attorney General,
Insurance Fraud Section,
Office of Attorney General



Frank J. Noonan
Retired Pennsylvania State Police
Commissioner



Frank E. Pawlowski
Retired Pennsylvania State
Police Commissioner



Ted Leonard
Executive Director, Pennsylvania
AAA Federation



Scott L. Bohn
Executive Director, PA Chiefs of
Police Association



theAUTHORITY
Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority

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