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theAUTHORITY
Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority



PENNSYLVANIA AUTO THEFT

PREVENTION AUTHORITY

ANNUAL REPORT

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

LETTER TO THE GOVERNOR 02.

The Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA) is pleased to report that auto theft in the Commonwealth declined more than 28 percent from 2023 to 2024. The most notable decreases occurred in Philadelphia, with steep declines in carjackings, auto thefts, and catalytic converter thefts. Targeted work by the ATPA grantees—alongside partnerships with federal agencies—led to these significant reductions.

Since the ATPA's inception in 1994, we've helped reduce vehicle theft in the Commonwealth by 54 percent. 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. 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."

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". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Ronald W. Kosh
Chairperson



03. WHAT IS THE PENNSYLVANIA AUTO THEFT PREVENTION AUTHORITY (ATPA)?

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 54 percent, with ATPA grantees recovering more than \$956 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.



FUNDING

The ATPA does not use tax dollars. Funds come from an annual assessment of 374 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 4.8 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.

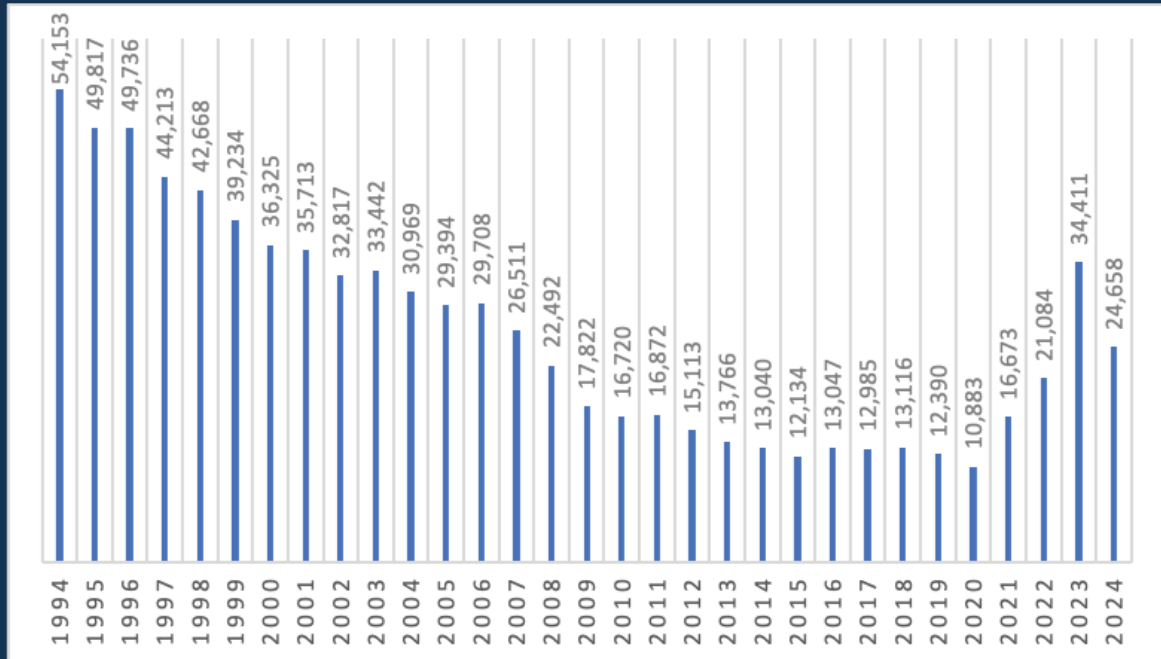
This year, the ATPA partnered with the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) to offer heavy equipment identification and theft training. Experienced investigators from the PSP Western Auto Theft Task Force taught attendees how to recognize and investigate the theft of heavy equipment and how to locate and recover identifying characteristics on the equipment. The program was free to attendees.

The ATPA also offered a training course on auto theft and vehicle crimes investigations. The class also included training on vehicle identification methods, luxury motor vehicle theft, thefts from dealerships, tactics for catching a thief, vehicle infotainment systems, motorcycle & ATV investigations, truck & van cases, and catalytic converter thefts.

It is estimated that 75 percent of all crimes are committed with a vehicle, and vehicles are used in two-thirds of abductions. Whether it is a robbery, kidnapping, homicide, terrorism, auto theft trafficking, or any other crime, it is important for a police officer to know the steps to correctly identify the vehicle used in the crime.



PENNSYLVANIA MOTOR VEHICLE THEFTS*



*Thefts are pulled from the Federal UCR through 2019. From 2020 to present, a below-average number of Pennsylvania law enforcement agencies are reporting to the FBI's National Incident-based Reporting System. Thefts are pulled from PA UCR as of 2020. The current year is not considered final.

PENNSYLVANIA MOTOR VEHICLE

THEFTS

1994

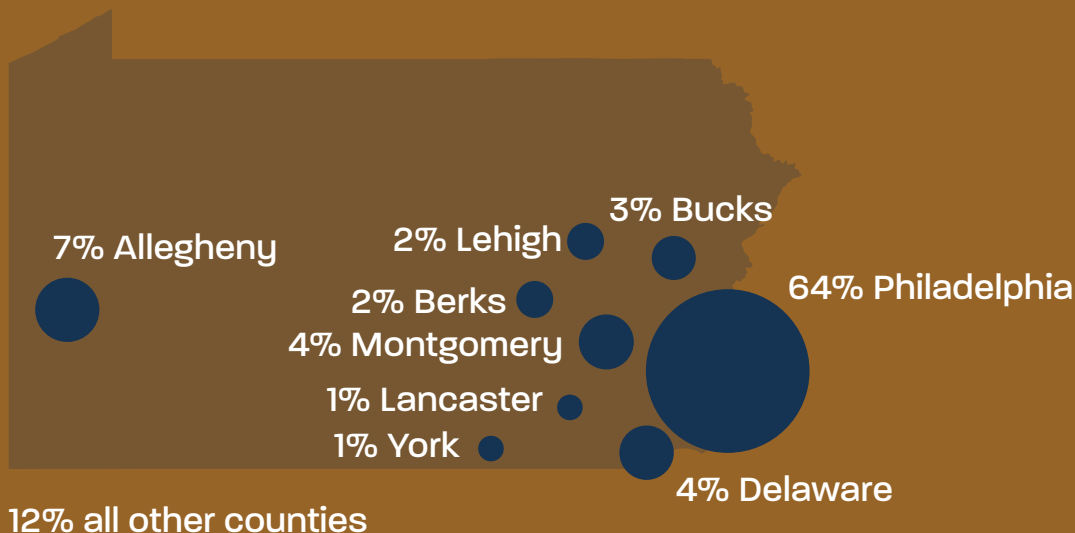
54,153

2024

24,658

As of 3/1/2025

AUTO THEFTS BY COUNTY



A close-up photograph of a person's hands wearing black nitrile gloves, using a thin metal lock-picking tool to manipulate a steering wheel lock. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a car's interior and a person's face in profile.

PHILADELPHIA

The Philadelphia Police Major Crimes Auto Squad led a successful effort to significantly reduce vehicle crimes in and around the city in 2024. The unit reported a **65 percent decrease in Kia and Hyundai** thefts last year. Several efforts contributed to this significant downturn:

- The Philadelphia Police Department teamed up with Kia and Hyundai to educate vehicle owners about the security upgrades available for the makes and models affected by the security flaw that started the “Kia Boyz” problem.
- All 21 Philadelphia police districts, in conjunction with the Major Crimes Unit and Community Relations Unit, held multiple community events and distributed steering wheel locking devices.
- The Major Crimes Unit conducted multiple investigations, working with patrol officers to identify thieves and make arrests.

PHILADELPHIA POLICE

The Philadelphia Police also reported a **56 percent decrease in carjackings since 2022**, with 1,309 carjackings in 2022, 900 in 2023, and 574 in 2024. This formation of the Carjacking Taskforce (CJTF), which included the Major Crimes Auto Squad lieutenant and 12 city detectives, and the CJTF's partnership with federal task force partners in the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and Federal Bureau of Investigations led to the dramatic decrease in carjackings.

- Along with leading investigations, the CJTF worked closely with local detectives and patrol officers to identify theft patterns and suspects. This information-sharing led to more arrests by officers on the street.
- In the three years since the formation of the CJTF, there have been more than 100 cases charged federally.

Philadelphia also reported a **steep reduction in stolen vehicles — a decrease of 35 percent** from 2023 to 2024. The decline in Kia and Hyundai thefts contributed to the overall decrease in auto thefts, as well as a significant increase in public education about auto theft prevention. Authorities also identified and pursued several organized crime rings and made numerous arrests, which further curbed vehicle crimes in the greater Philadelphia area.

Catalytic converter thefts in Philadelphia have become almost nonexistent, with a historic downturn.

When the problem was first identified in 2021, police reported 3,450 converter thefts. That number increased to 5,980 during the height of the problem in 2022. Then, in 2023, a joint investigation between the Philadelphia Police and Bucks County led to the takedown of a corrupt Philadelphia business, netting more than 10 arrests and helping reduce the year-end total of catalytic converter thefts to 1,614. With those suspects off the street, the city experienced only 211 catalytic converter thefts in 2024.



2024 GRANTEES

**OUR GRANTEES
SHARE AN
IMPRESSIVE
COMMITMENT TO**

OUR MISSION

In 2024, ATPA grantees made 409 arrests and 786 convictions and recovered \$58.2 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

- 2 detectives (50% 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 district attorney (90% funded)
- 1 paralegal (90% funded)

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



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.

The ATPA continues to spread a simple, clear prevention message across the state, while also focusing on the highest crime areas. In 2024, the ATPA deployed custom digital education campaigns to reach the broadest audience, specifically targeting Philadelphia due to the prior year's 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.

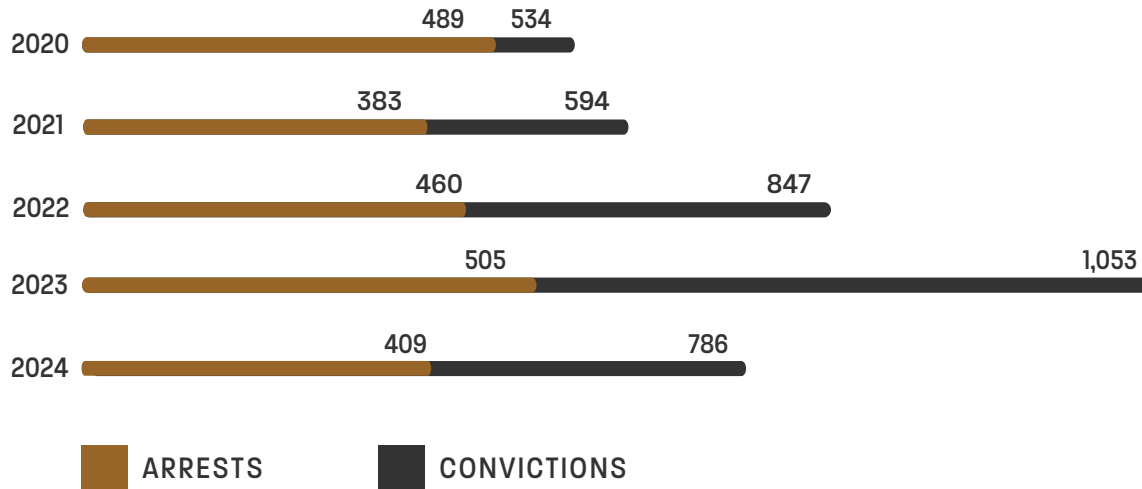


CRIME WATCH PARTNER

The ATPA also partnered with CrimeWatch to distribute monthly community vehicle crime prevention messaging across the Commonwealth via email, newsletters, and social media.



INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED AND CONVICTED

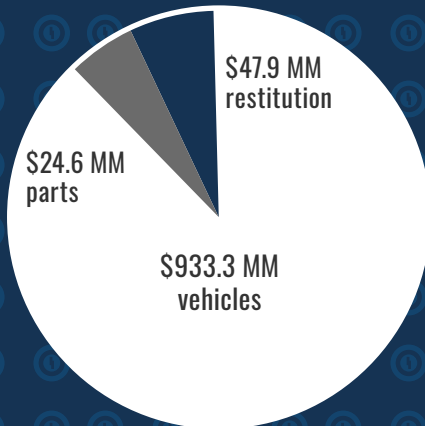


VALUE OF RECOVERIES

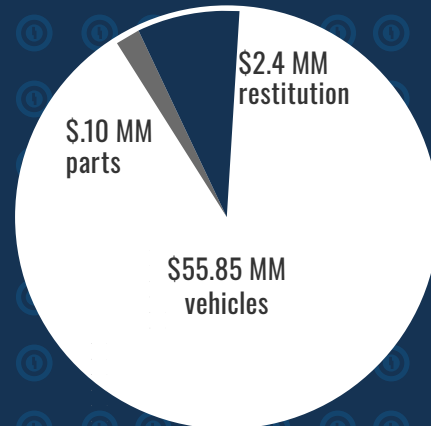
\$958 MILLION

total value of recovered vehicles and parts
since inception in 1994

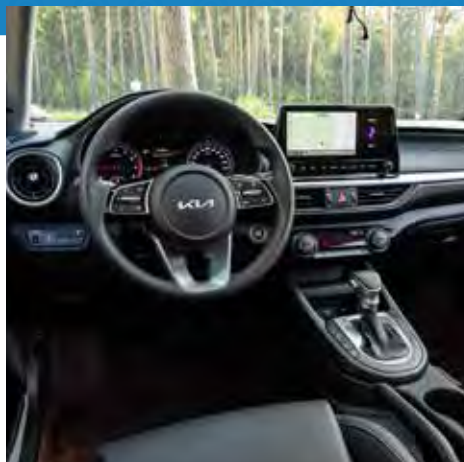
INCEPTION



2024



19. AUTO THEFT TRENDS



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. With the use of a USB cord, the vehicle can be started and stolen in minutes.

While there was a decline of cases over the prior year, every ATPA grantee noted thefts of this nature in 2024. Many of the crimes were committed by juveniles who were influenced by the "Kia Challenge," the viral trend on social media that glamorized the theft of these vehicles. Several grantees organized community giveaways of steering wheel locking devices from 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. They apparently plug a laptop computer into the vehicle's system and wirelessly transmit a programming code to a blank key fob. Investigators reported an uptick in Dodge vehicles being stolen without a key. Thieves can learn these high-tech break-ins on TikTok and YouTube, where videos offer instructions on how to hijack certain cars.





POWERSPORT VEHICLES

Grantees reported an increase in the thefts of powersport vehicles like motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, motorized scooters, mini bikes, and dirt bikes. These thefts commonly bring other problems, like driving on sidewalks, groups of riders doing wheelies on interstates, and attempts to allude police at the expense of community safety. These thefts also often include title washing investigations, with counterfeit titles, re-vinned stolen vehicles, and identity theft investigations.

FINANCIAL

Fiscal year 2023 - 2024

Assessments	8,499,980
Interest earned	21,139
Realized gain (loss) on disposal	10,000
Total revenue	8,531,119
Balance carried over from prior year	10,211,641
Total funds available	18,742,760

Program expenses

Grants paid	(7,049,021)
Grant reviews	(79,483)
Public awareness	(373,211)
Training	(5,000)
Total	(7,506,715)

Operating expenses

Personnel expenses	(280,002)
Operating expenses	(129,793)
Total	(409,795)

Net effect of balance sheet changes	(6,527,094)
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Year-end balance:	4,299,156
(to be applied to future grants and operational expenditures)	

The ATPA operated at 4.8 percent of the total assessments collected.

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

BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF 23.



Ronald W. Kosh
Chairperson



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



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



James Bonetti
Senior Investigator, Erie Insurance



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



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