

# ANNUAL REPORT

2025



**theAUTHORITY**  
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.**

To the Honorable Governor Josh Shapiro and members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly:

The Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA) is pleased to report that auto theft in the Commonwealth declined more than 3 percent from 2024 to 2025. This marks the second year of decline following the post-pandemic theft surge. In 2025, ATPA grantees made 294 arrests and 914 convictions and recovered more than \$60 million in vehicles, parts, and restitution.

Since the ATPA's inception in 1994, we've helped reduce vehicle theft in the Commonwealth by 55 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.

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 written in a cursive style.

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 55 percent, with ATPA grantees recovering more than \$959.1 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 driver 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 378 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 5.2 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.

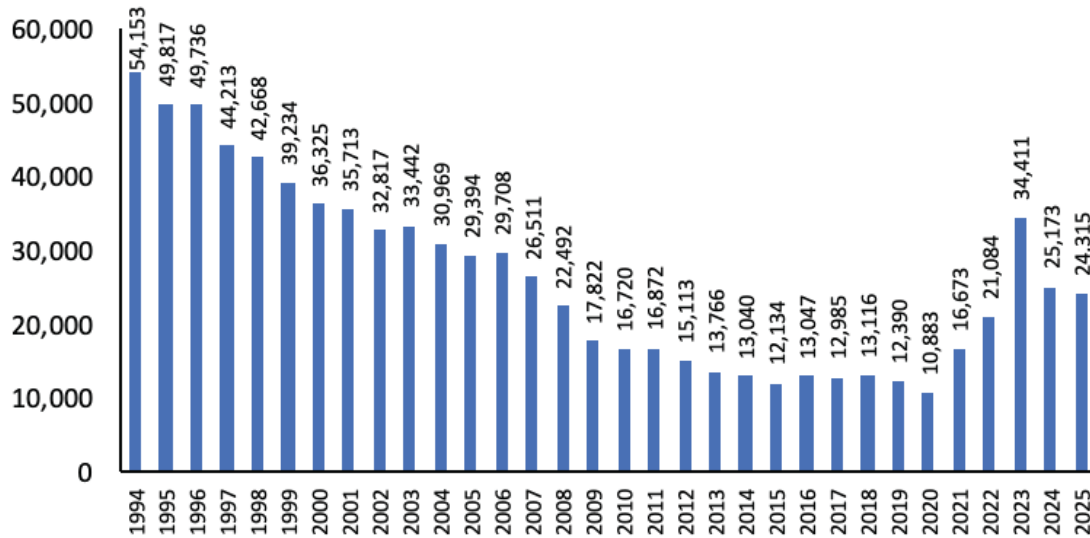
This year, the ATPA partnered with the Pennsylvania State Police and the National Insurance Crime Bureau to conduct a training program on auto theft investigations. Attendees learned how to spot altered vehicle identification numbers and developed expertise to conduct large-scale auto-theft investigations and prosecutions. The program was free to attendees.

Additionally, the ATPA was an alliance partner providing support for the annual vehicle crimes conference of the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators held in Hershey, PA. The conference provided education and training from global experts about auto crime and current trends.



# 07. THEFTS

## 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

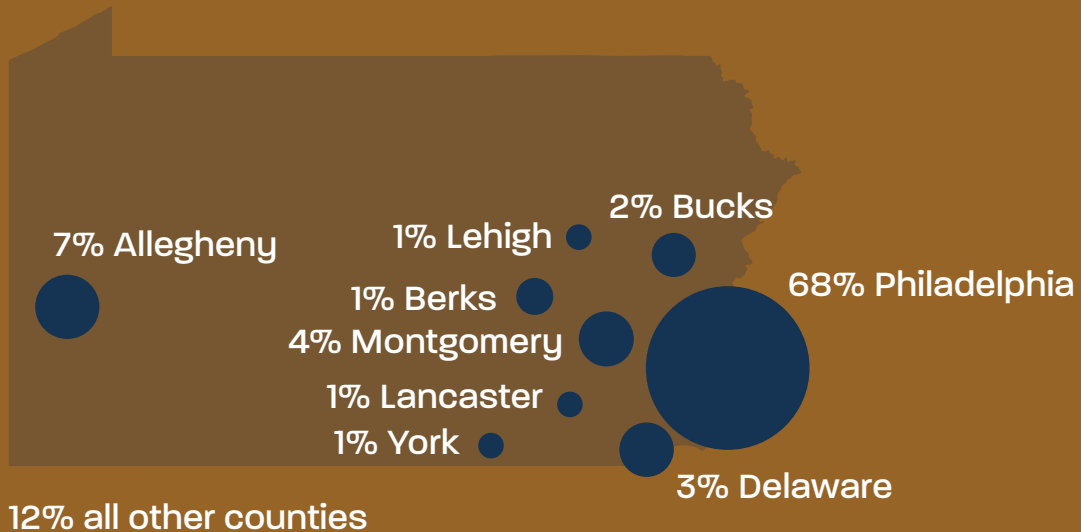
54,153

2025

24,315

as of 3/1/2026

## AUTO THEFTS BY COUNTY



**2025**  
**GRANTEES**

**OUR GRANTEES  
SHARE AN  
IMPRESSIVE  
COMMITMENT TO**

**OUR  
MISSION**

**In 2025, ATPA grantees made 294 arrests and 914 convictions and recovered over \$60 million in vehicles, parts, and restitution.**

ATPA grantees span the Commonwealth 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 funds 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)
- 16 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

### PITTSBURGH POLICE

- 2 detectives (fully funded)
- 2 detectives (partial overtime and expenses)
- 1 division supervisor (partial overtime and expenses)

### LANCASTER CITY POLICE

(grant through 6/30/25)

- 2 detectives (50% funded)
- 1 assistant DA (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)



# 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 (60% funded)
- 1 secretary (60% funded)
- 4 detectives from local police departments (fully funded)

## NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

(effective 7/1/25)

- 1 assistant DA

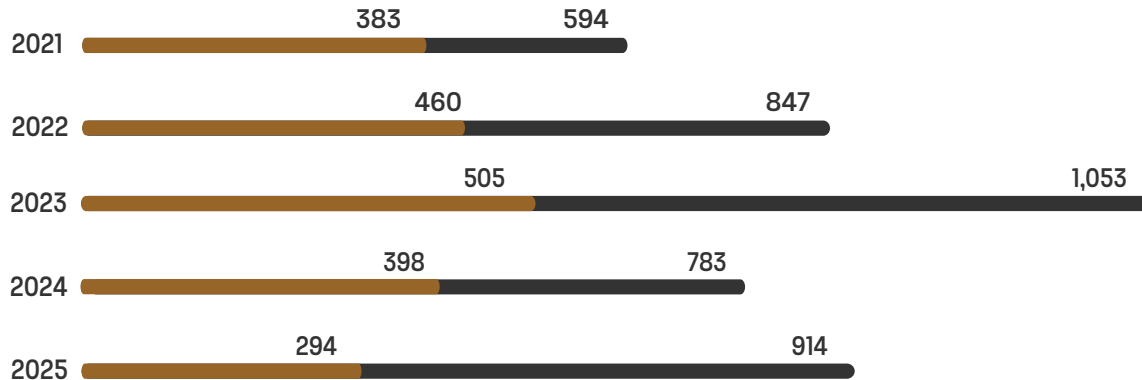
## PHILADELPHIA

- 1 assistant DA (90% funded)
- 1 paralegal (90% funded)

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



## INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED AND CONVICTED



 ARRESTS

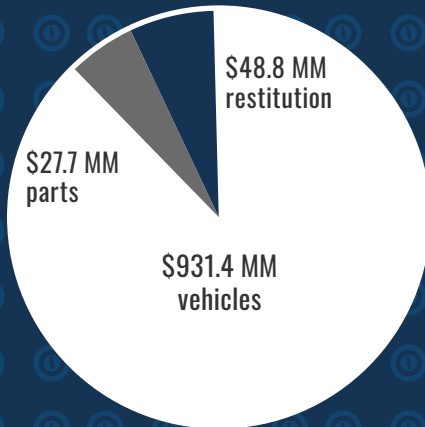
 CONVICTIONS

# VALUE OF RECOVERIES

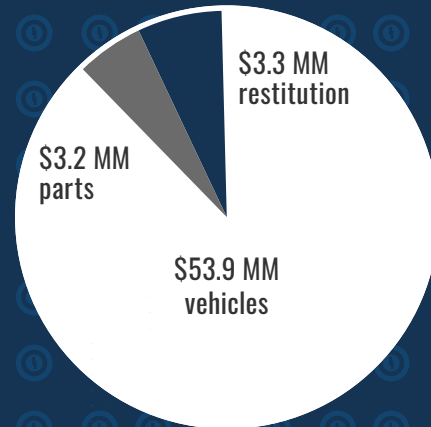
# \$959.1 MILLION

total value of recovered vehicles and parts since inception (1994)

INCEPTION



2025



## 15. 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 many of the state's stolen cars were left unlocked with the keys inside – or while leaving a car “puffing” (unlocked, unattended, and running).

The ATPA continues to spread a simple, clear prevention message across the state, while also focusing on areas with the highest crime areas. In 2025, the ATPA supported sponsorships with the Philadelphia Phillies, 76ers, and Penn State Athletics, reaching fans locally and throughout the state through social media, email, in-app messaging, in-stadium messaging, and/or radio broadcasts. The awareness and prevention campaigns generated millions of impressions to encourage car owners to stay vigilant.



**TOGETHER WE CAN PREVENT AUTO THEFT**  
*6 Tips to Secure Your Ride*

- Always take your keys and lock all doors—every time.
- Park in well-lit, visible areas.
- Never leave your vehicle running unattended.
- Never leave key fobs by the front door.
- Use theft deterrents such as steering wheel locks, alarms, kill switches, OBD locks, and faraday bags.
- Check with your dealership for vehicle updates.



More information on why you should use these tips.

# SHORT VIDEOS



As part of the Phillies 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.

## CRIMEWATCH PARTNER

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

A screenshot of a website article from the Camp Hill Police Department. The article is titled "HIGH-TECH AUTO THEFT - AN EMERGING THREAT" and discusses the risks of high-tech auto theft. It includes a list of tips for preventing theft, such as using a steering wheel lock, using a steering wheel lock, and using a steering wheel lock. The article also mentions that the Camp Hill Police Department is a partner with CrimeWatch. The website header includes the Camp Hill Police Department logo and navigation links for Home, About Us, Contact, Resources, Forms, and a link to the Police Department website. The article text is partially obscured by a dark overlay on the right side of the image.



### TRUUBLING TREND: STOLEN VEHICLES AND ONLINE MARKETPLACES

Investigators and grantees across multiple regions of the Commonwealth reported significant criminal activity involving stolen vehicles being sold through online marketplaces, including Facebook Marketplace. Thieves appear to “shop” for potential targets on the online platforms. Victims often were unsuspecting, first-time car buyers who are unaware of how to verify the legitimacy of a vehicle.

Investigators say stolen vehicles are sold using cash transactions, counterfeit titles, falsified seller information, and, in some cases, third-party tag agents. In Delaware County, investigators were

repeatedly requested to identify re-vinned vehicles purchased through an online platform. In one case, a foreign victim was deceived and purchased three late-model Honda vehicles for cash at prices just below Kelley Blue Book value; all three vehicles were later confirmed stolen from the New York City region.

Consumers are urged to carefully verify a vehicle’s history and documentation, avoid cash-only transactions, and complete all sales in safe, public locations. Staying informed and cautious can help prevent falling victim to auto theft and protect both personal property and the community.

## SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGE PERSISTS

Kia and Hyundai thefts continued to impact multiple regions of the Commonwealth, driven in part by a popular social media trend commonly referred to as the “Kia Boyz Challenge.” These vehicles were vulnerable due to the lack of engine immobilizers and other basic auto theft prevention technology. The theft method, widely shared online, involved damaging the ignition or steering column to gain access to the vehicle and start it without a key. Many of these thefts and attempted thefts are committed by juveniles and often result in significant damage even when the vehicle is not successfully stolen.

Increased public awareness and the use of visible anti-theft devices, such as steering wheel locks, proved to be effective deterrents. Several grantees publicly promoted vehicle security measures and distributed steering wheel-locking devices to reduce opportunities for theft and improve community safety.



# OPERATION DIRTY PAPER

PENNSYLVANIA  
OFFICE OF  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

## OPERATION DIRTY PAPER

In June 2025, the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General and the Pennsylvania State Police announced charges against 15 individuals and two businesses following a multi-agency investigation known as “Operation Dirty Paper.” The investigation uncovered a central Pennsylvania criminal enterprise that allegedly stole rental vehicles, altered vehicle identification numbers, and resold them through a Lebanon-based chop shop and related auto businesses. Authorities said the scheme also involved title washing, fraudulent vehicle inspections, identity theft, and other financial crimes, generating more than \$500,000 in illegal profits and harming consumers who unknowingly purchased altered vehicles. Criminal charges, and any discussion thereof, are merely allegations and all defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.



**SCHEME 1**  
Theft of  
Vehicles



**SCHEME 2**  
Vidal Chop  
Shop

**VIDAL  
ORGANIZATION  
SCHEMES**

**SCHEME 4**  
Financial  
Crime



**SCHEME 3**  
Illicit  
Vehicle Sales



**Attorney General Dave Sunday**  
*Criminal Law Division*



# PHILADELPHIA

Over the past five years, Philadelphia has experienced an overall decline in stolen vehicles. By the end of 2024, stolen vehicles had decreased by 35% compared to 2023, and thefts continued to decline in 2025 relative to the 2023 peak. While vehicle theft increased slightly—about 2%—between 2024 and 2025, this change was largely driven by a rise in stolen Honda and Acura vehicles, alongside a significant decrease in Kia and Hyundai thefts. Attempted vehicle thefts also declined by approximately 22% in 2025 compared with 2024.

In 2025, the Philadelphia Police Department launched a multi-faceted community campaign to raise auto theft awareness. The goal was to thwart Honda and Acura thefts in at-risk areas, to educate the community about current theft trends, and to increase crime prevention at mini-marts and gas stations throughout the city. The ATPA provided communications support to the campaign as well as added media exposure.

# FINANCIAL

## Fiscal year 2024 - 2025

Assessments	8,500,000
Interest earned	26,155
Realized gain (loss) on disposal	0
Total revenue	8,526,155
Balance carried over from prior year	4,299,156
Total funds available	<b>12,825,311</b>

### Program expenses

Grants paid	(7,462,294)
Grant reviews	(79,717)
Public awareness	(390,452)
Training	(6,149)
VIN etching	(0)
Total	<b>(7,938,612)</b>

### Operating expenses

Personnel expenses	(300,941)
Operating expenses	(141,300)
Total	<b>(442,241)</b>

Net effect of balance sheet changes (457,692)

Year-end balance: **4,902,150**  
(to be applied to future grants and operational expenditures)

The ATPA operated at 5.2 percent of the total assessments collected.

**LEADERSHIP** — Steven R. Wheeler | Executive Director



**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



**Michele Christensen**  
Assistant Vice President Casualty  
Claims, Donegal Insurance Group



**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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