



**Motor Vehicle Theft  
and Insurance Fraud  
Prevention Board**

# 2016 Annual Report

**New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services**  
*80 South Swan Street, Albany, New York 12210*

[www.criminaljustice.ny.gov](http://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov)

**New York State  
Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Board  
2016 Annual Report**

This report is submitted by the Board as required by Section 846-1(3)(h) of the New York State Executive Law. The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services provides staff support to the Board.

*Issued September 2017*

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*Executive Deputy Commissioner*  
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## I. Introduction

The impact of motor vehicle theft and motor vehicle insurance fraud on insurance rates in New York State and across the country cannot be understated. These crimes are highly sophisticated and cost law-abiding motor vehicle owners and insurance policy holders hundreds of millions of dollars in increased business expenses and higher insurance rates annually.

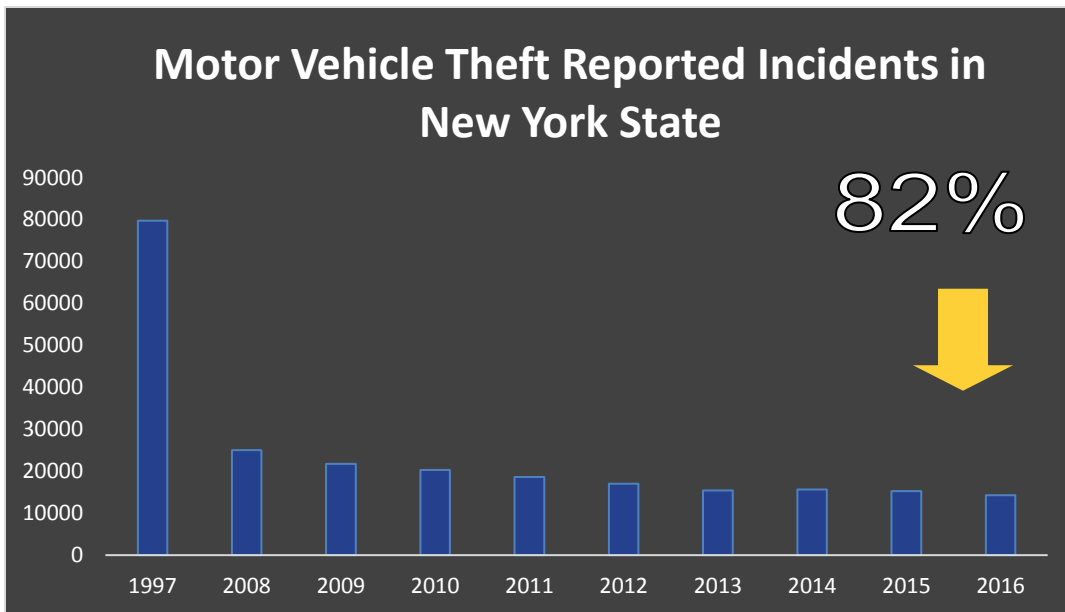
Created in 1994 by state Executive Law Article 36-A, the New York Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Demonstration Program (MVTIFP) is designed to reduce the overall cost of motor vehicle insurance in the state by targeting theft and fraud. A 12-member Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Board, including representatives of law enforcement, consumers, insurance carriers, and relevant state agency representatives selected by the Governor and the Legislature, is responsible for overseeing the program. The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services(DCJS) provides staff support to the board and the program.

This annual report details the activities of the board and the program and is published as required under Executive Law §846-1(3)(h).

The program is funded by a statutorily required fee assessed on each motor vehicle insurance policy issued in New York State. The 2015-16 state budget appropriated \$3.7 million for the program, which was used to support grants to combat theft and fraud to law enforcement agencies and other entities during the calendar year 2016.

### A. Motor Vehicle Theft

Great strides have been made in reducing motor vehicle theft in New York. From 1997 through 2016, reported thefts were down 82 percent. In 2016, there were 14,255 motor vehicles stolen in New York State, representing a slight decrease from the 15,269 reported stolen in 2015.



While much of the motor vehicle theft continues to occur in the New York City region, six non-New York City counties rank among the top 10 counties for reported motor vehicle thefts: Erie, Monroe, Nassau, Onondaga, Suffolk and Westchester.

Of the top 10 counties, eight of them experienced decreases in incidents of motor vehicle theft from 2015 to 2016.

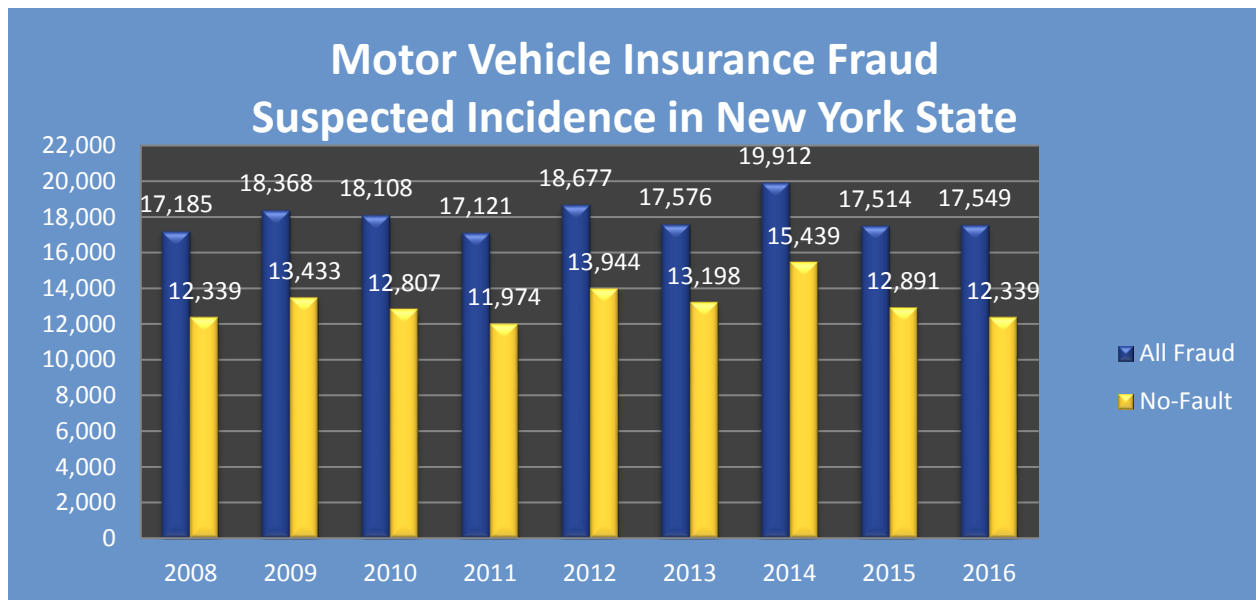
Only Onondaga and Nassau counties experienced increases in reported theft.

Motor Vehicle Theft 2015 vs. 2016 Top Ten Counties			
County	2015	2016	% Change
Kings	2,480	2,081	(16)
Queens	2,270	1,933	(15)
Bronx	1,593	1,367	(14)
Erie	1,302	1,180	(9)
Suffolk	1,219	1,162	(5)
Monroe	1,067	952	(11)
New York	824	741	(10)
Nassau	683	691	0
Westchester	679	605	(11)
Onondaga	439	511	16

**B. Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud**

Following a slight decrease in the number of reports of suspected insurance fraud from insurers across the state in 2015, the New York State Department of Financial Services (DFS) Insurance Fraud Bureau has seen an increase in such reports in 2016.

Over a seven-year period, overall reports of motor vehicle insurance fraud increased 16 percent – from 17,185 in 2008 to 19,912 in 2014, before dropping to 17,514 in 2015. In 2016, overall reports of motor vehicle insurance fraud increased to 17,549. No-fault insurance fraud reports decreased from 12,891 in 2015 to 12,339 in 2016.



While recent annual reports of suspected motor vehicle insurance fraud remain below historic highs, they have consistently equaled or exceeded 2008 levels and warrant a continued focus on reducing the incidence of these offenses.

## II. Statewide Statistics

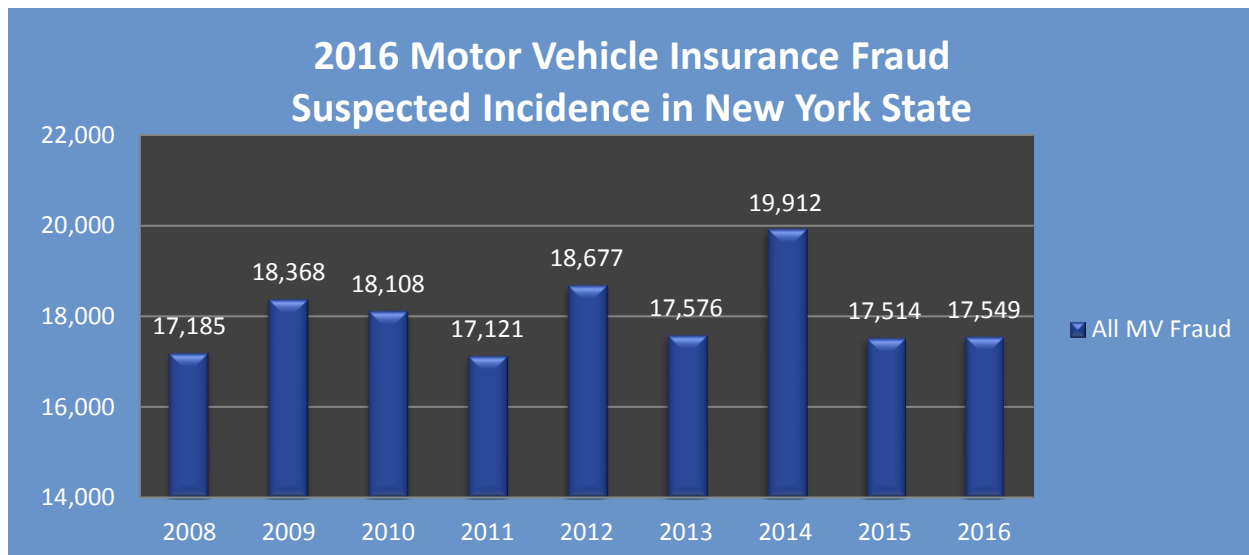
New York State drivers are statutorily required to have automobile insurance that includes coverage for the following:

- **No-Fault Personal Injury Protection:** To pay medical expenses, lost earnings and other reasonable and necessary expenses for a driver or passenger injured in, or a pedestrian injured by, their vehicle.
- **Liability:** To protect against the harm their vehicle –or any vehicle they drive with the owner's permission –might do to other people and their property.
- **Uninsured Motorists:** To protect against the injuries that they, their family or their passengers might suffer in a hit-and-run accident or in an accident with an uninsured vehicle.

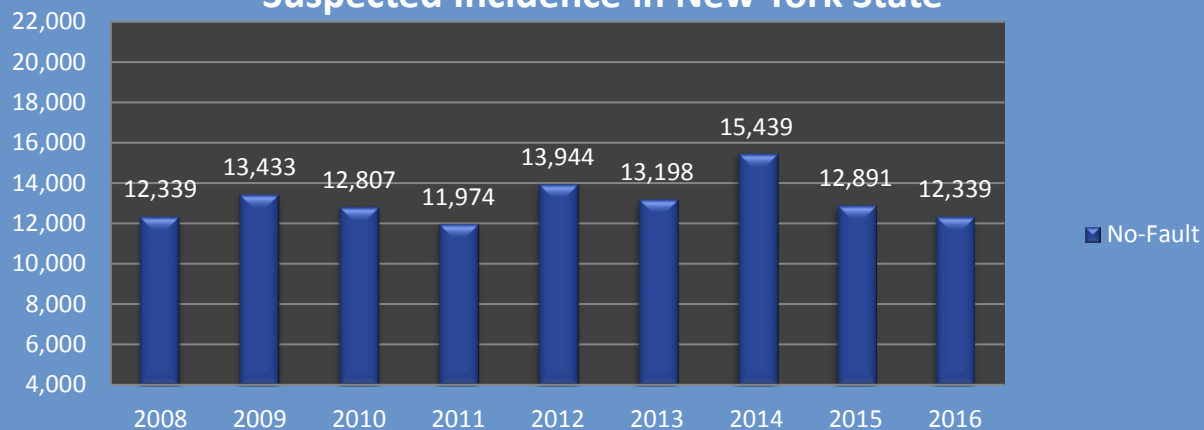
No-fault motor vehicle insurance fraud accounted for 53 percent of the total insurance fraud reports documented.

Insurance carriers reported 17,549 incidents of suspected motor vehicle insurance fraud to the DFS Insurance Frauds Bureau in 2016, including motor vehicle theft, motor vehicle arson, larceny from motor vehicles, motor vehicle vandalism, motor vehicle collision damage, falsified motor vehicle invoices and fraudulent motor vehicle insurance cards.

Based on this data, no-fault insurance fraud accounted for approximately 70 percent of all suspected incidents of motor vehicle insurance fraud reported in 2016.



## 2016 Motor Vehicle No-Fault Insurance Fraud Suspected Incidence in New York State



### III. Program Goals

The goal of the MVTIFP program is to provide an integrated means to prevent, deter and reduce the incidence of motor vehicle theft and motor vehicle insurance fraud. The program provides funding for initiatives that include theft and fraud prevention education; and the establishment and maintenance of specialized law enforcement units to combat motor vehicle theft and motor vehicle insurance fraud. Eligible applicants for funding include local law enforcement agencies and not-for-profit organizations that administer one or more motor vehicle theft or insurance fraud prevention programs or driver safety programs conforming to a plan approved by the board.

As required by Executive Law Article 36-A, statewide [Motor Vehicle Theft](#) and [Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud](#) Plans of Operation are updated annually on recommendations from the board. These separate plans of operation include: assessing the scope of motor vehicle theft and motor vehicle insurance fraud problems, including a regional analysis of motor vehicle theft and/or motor vehicle insurance fraud incidents and related activities; and analyses of various methods of combating problems associated with motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud.

Both plans of operation are available on the [DCJS website](#) and provide guidance on the types of projects supported by program funding.

### IV. Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Board

The Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention program is administered by a 12-member Board with the DCJS commissioner or his or her designee serving as its chairman. All board members are appointed by the governor; three are recommended by the speaker of the state Assembly; three by the temporary president of the state Senate; and the remaining five by the governor. Members serve four-year terms and are not considered public officials. The board is to be representative of consumers of motor vehicle insurance, motor vehicle insurance companies, law enforcement agencies and the judicial system. The board must meet a minimum of four times annually.

The board is charged with developing and recommending coordinated plans of operation that provide for the statewide reduction of motor vehicle theft and motor vehicle insurance fraud. Elements of the plans must include:



1. Assessments of the magnitude and scope of the problems, including an analysis of theft and fraud by region.
2. Methods for combating the problems.
3. Development of a competitive request for proposal (RFP) process to fund local programs to combat both problems.

Pursuant to the recommendations of the board, Executive Law Article 36-A authorizes the DCJS commissioner to:

1. Execute contracts.
2. Accept grants and other contributions.
3. Make grants through an RFP process.
4. Appoint employees and affix compensation.
5. Request assistance and information from the New York State Police, police departments throughout the state, state Department of Financial Services, state Department of Motor Vehicles, state Office of Court Administration, any New York state agency or from any insurer.
6. Assist municipalities in the development of local programs.
7. Advise and assist the superintendent of Insurance pursuant to Insurance Law §2348 (this section now requires that rate filings reflect insurers' savings resulting from the program).
8. Annually submit to the governor and chairs of the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means committees a report on the board's activities, the activities of grant recipients and the results or impact of those activities.

**A. Board Activity**

The board met on the following dates in 2016: March 22, June 14, Sept. 13, and Dec. 13.

**B. Programs Funded by the Board for Calendar Year 2017**

The Board approved the following award amounts in 2016 for the calendar year 2017:

<b>New York City</b>	<b>Award</b>
Bronx County District Attorney	\$321,918
Kings County District Attorney	\$238,926
New York County District Attorney	\$250,900
Queens County District Attorney	\$556,000
Richmond County District Attorney	\$50,190
New York City Police Department (NYPD) Auto Crime Unit	\$199,000
NYPD Fraudulent Collision Investigation Squad	\$100,000
New York City Fire Department	\$124,800

<b>New York City Suburban Region</b>	<b>Award</b>
Nassau County District Attorney	\$114,217
Nassau County Police Department	\$145,783
Suffolk County District Attorney	\$293,010
Suffolk County Police Department	\$133,233
Westchester County District Attorney	\$288,500
Yonkers City Police Department	\$132,950

<b>Capital Region</b>	<b>Award</b>
Albany City Police Department	\$33,775
Albany County District Attorney	\$65,825

<b>Finger Lakes/Western New York</b>	<b>Award</b>
Buffalo City Police Department	\$107,400
Cheektowaga Town Police Department	\$38,542
Erie County District Attorney	\$105,258
Monroe County District Attorney	\$111,001
Monroe County Sheriff Office	\$34,720
Rochester City Police Department	\$44,336
Niagara County District Attorney	\$109,966
Niagara County Sheriff Department	\$19,050
Niagara Falls City Police Department	\$28,900

<b>Statewide</b>	<b>Award</b>
New York Anti-Car Theft and Fraud Association	\$62,000
New York Prosecutors Training Institute	\$38,800

## V. 2016 Grant Program Descriptions

### New York City

#### **Bronx District Attorney's Office**

The Bronx District Attorney's Office Anti-Auto Theft Unit, in collaboration with individual New York Police Department (NYPD) precincts, has investigated both auto crime and insurance fraud matters since 1995 –the first year it received grant funding.

The Bronx Anti-Auto Theft program used \$321,918 to fund partial salaries of six assistant district attorneys, five investigators, and a forensic accountant. This grant is designed to increase the number of successful prosecutions of defendants charged with grand larceny of a motor vehicle, criminal possession of stolen property, motor vehicle fraud, auto stripping and/or unauthorized use of a vehicle.

#### 2016 Activities

The Bronx District Attorney's Office owns four bait cars used to enhance undercover operations. Working jointly with police precincts throughout Bronx County that have experienced an increase in car theft, the bait cars are positioned in high crime areas with plainclothes police officers stationed nearby. In 2016, prosecutors worked with Bronx precincts to conduct 48 bait car operations and to use the license plate reader owned by the department to supplement investigations.

Joint operations between the NYPD and the district attorney's Auto Crime Unit led to the recovery of 114 vehicles valued at approximately \$1,717,135.

Investigators and assistant prosecutors at the Bronx District Attorney's Office have maintained relationships and communications with collaborating partners in the fields of auto theft and insurance fraud.

In 2016, investigators and prosecutors conferred with the following partner agencies: National Insurance Crime Bureau, the New York City Auto Crime Squad, Auto Larceny Unit and NYPD precinct commands, adjacent and remote local police commands, the New York State Police, the state Department of Financial Services, New York State and out-of-state prosecutors' offices, the state Department of Motor Vehicles, and special investigations units of major motor vehicle insurance carriers.

The district attorney's office dedicated six assistant district attorneys and five investigators to work auto theft and insurance fraud cases as part of this project. In 2016, a part-time forensic accountant was also supported by grant funds and provided assistance in insurance fraud investigations.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	19	Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	52
Fraud Investigations Initiated	21	Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	243
Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	357	Restitution Ordered	\$0

## Kings County District Attorney's Office

The Kings County (Brooklyn) District Attorney's Office used \$238,926 to fund six part-time assistant prosecutors, two part-time supervisors, one detective investigator and one part-time paralegal, in addition to necessary training on advances in the field. Motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases are primarily handled by the Trial Division Zones, while the Investigations Division focuses on long-term investigations. The Zone program divides Brooklyn's 23 police precincts into five trial zones to enhance communications between prosecutors, police precinct commanders, and community leaders.

### 2016 Activities

To maximize impact, the district attorney's office utilizes a three-pronged approach to fight motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud. The first prong focuses resources on prosecuting street level motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud. The second calls for long-term investigations into organized schemes, including the following: fraudulent vehicle theft claims; fictitious invoices from collision repair shops; fraudulent no-fault claims arising from staged accidents; fraudulent medical claims arising from exaggerated or non-existent medical treatment; and fraudulent durable medical equipment claims. The third prong focuses on identifying those who fund and benefit from organized motor vehicle crime, so authorities can pursue asset forfeiture and financial penalties.

By collaborating with other agencies, the district attorney's office utilizes joint resources and expertise to target, analyze, and fight emerging and existing criminal patterns. Through the Zone Program, the district attorney's office can work with the NYPD to identify geographic areas where thefts commonly occur, individuals who are commonly associated with thefts, and trends in the methods used to perpetrate thefts. In addition, the office works closely with the National Insurance Crime Bureau and various insurance Special Investigative Units to conduct long-term, multi-target investigations. In 2016, the district attorney's office collaborated with the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) on a case that involved a city corrections officer who hired someone to set his car on fire, then reported the vehicle stolen to collect the insurance money.

The district attorney's office utilizes strategies including surveillance, confidential informants, undercover operations, and searches to detect, prevent, and deter motor vehicle crime. The office conducts thorough background checks on targets to identify prior offenses and associates who may be involved in the target crimes. In coordination with police precinct officers, zone prosecutors work to alert the public of emerging crime patterns.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	12	Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	6
Fraud Investigations Initiated	0	Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	6
Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	27	Restitution Ordered	\$0

## New York County District Attorney's Office

In 2016, the New York County (Manhattan) District Attorney's Office used \$250,900 to fund eight part-time assistant district attorneys, two part-time investigative analysts, a part-time investigator and a part-time paralegal. This bolsters the district attorney's ability to investigate and prosecute crimes such as motor vehicle theft, unlicensed operation of motor vehicles, automobile-part theft rings, insurance fraud and lost wage fraud associated with medical mills; and to combat the production, possession, and use

of counterfeit auto insurance and motor vehicle related documents. The program is overseen by the bureau chief of the Financial Frauds Bureau and the deputy chief of the Rackets Bureau, with investigation and prosecution assistance from assistant district attorneys and support staff in the Rackets Bureau, Major Economic Crimes Bureau, and Trial Division.

2016 Activity

Members of the Financial Frauds Bureau, the Major Economic Crimes Bureau, and the Rackets Bureau conduct long-term investigations into sophisticated criminal schemes pertaining to motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud. Assistant district attorneys and support staff investigated and prosecuted several significant cases in 2016, including the following:

The Rackets Bureau, along with NYPD detectives and investigators from the New York State Department of Financial Services Frauds Bureau have been data-mining the complaints filed in the Insurance Frauds Bureau database. In November 2015, the data-mining collaboration led to the arrest of four individuals for falsifying an accident report and several insurance claims. The defendants were charged with offering a false instrument for filing. In 2016, all four defendants pleaded guilty to violations resulting in approximately \$750 dollars in fines and \$1300 in restitution to the insurance carrier. This investigation and data mining is ongoing.

Throughout 2016, staff in the Rackets Bureau, along with NYPD detectives and investigators from the district attorney’s office, investigated two separate individuals who fraudulently represented themselves as insurance brokers and convinced victims they could obtain insurance for a low cost. After collecting money from the victims, the individuals purchased automobile insurance policies using stolen credit cards. The insurance policies were later cancelled when the fraudulent credit card charges were discovered. Using this scheme, the defendants cost automobile insurance companies at least \$50,000 in lost premium payments. Both targets were indicted in February 2017 based on the investigative work conducted in 2016.

Additionally, assistant district attorneys, along with NYPD detectives, investigators from the New York City Sheriff’s Office and National Insurance Crime Bureau conducted a long-term investigation into a criminal enterprise that was illegally operating numerous tow companies and auto body shops. The targets are suspected of grand larceny, scheme to defraud, offering a false instrument for filing and insurance fraud. The investigation is ongoing and is expected to result in arrests in 2017.

In addition, the Trial Division of the district attorney’s office handled dozens of fraudulent document cases –many of which arose from routine car stops by NYPD patrol officers. Other cases involved persons arrested while driving stolen cars or vehicles that they were not authorized to use while committing credit card fraud, identity theft, and other offences. In several cases, vehicle stops allowed authorities to recover forged documents, including licenses, insurance cards, vehicle registrations, titles, sales receipts, inspection stickers, VIN plates, license plates, city official parking plaques, credit cards, skimming devices, and checks. Typically, these false documents –especially bogus driver’s licenses – were used to commit identity theft and other financial frauds.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	1	Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	1
Fraud Investigations Initiated	14	Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	13
Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	7	Restitution Ordered	\$0

## Queens County District Attorney's Office

The Queens County District Attorney's Office used \$556,000 to fund three full-time assistant district attorneys, two part-time supervisors and three full-time investigators assigned to the Specialized Auto Crime and Insurance Fraud Unit. This specialized unit focuses on long-term investigations and handling specially selected cases for trial that target organized auto theft and insurance fraud activity. A major emphasis is placed on building enterprise corruption cases so that this type of criminal activity is uprooted and the resulting defendants receive maximum sentences.

### 2016 Activities

In 2016, the district attorney's office continued its strategy of combating auto crimes and insurance fraud through long-term investigative activity and targeting cases for specialized handling with stiff dispositions and sentencing. This approach involves strong law enforcement and agency partnerships. Staff is dedicated to enhanced investigative and prosecutorial initiatives, meaning cases can be targeted for stiff dispositions and sentencing. The strategy utilizes intensive investigative activity, including sting operations, development of confidential informants, surveillance, and electronic eavesdropping. Other important components include vertical prosecutions, intelligence gathering and sharing, crime analysis, and the use of state-of-the-art technology. Here are some of the highlights from 2016:

An investigation into dozens of vehicle thefts dating back to 2014 resulted in six individuals being indicted on charges including grand larceny and criminal possession of stolen property. The defendants marked the locations of specific makes and models of vehicles parked in Queens County and elsewhere on their cell phone maps. This data was then forwarded to other members of the crew to steal later. As a result, two defendants were sentenced to a prison term, one to serve in city jail, and another to a conditional discharge.

Another investigation resulted in the arrest of four individuals caught staging motor vehicle collisions to generate fraudulent billings for unnecessary medical treatment. In at least one instance, the perpetrators coached an undercover officer who was being paid for his participation in the fraud scheme to exaggerate his nonexistent injuries. The insurance companies were allegedly defrauded of more than \$88,000. Grand larceny and insurance fraud charges are now pending.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	15	Indictments for MVTIF offenses	17
Fraud Investigations Initiated	12	Convictions for MVTIF offenses	47
Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	70	Restitution Ordered	\$90,500

## Richmond County District Attorney's Office

The Richmond County (Staten Island) District Attorney's Office used \$50,190 to fund four part-time assistant district attorneys and one part-time investigator. The Supreme Court Bureau investigates and prosecutes all program felony cases; and the Criminal Court Bureau prosecutes cases with felony charges that have the potential to be pled down to a misdemeanor.

## 2016 Activities

The district attorney's approach to case reviews included interviews of suspects and witnesses to gain intelligence about defendants' typical methods and to learn about the latest technologies employed by criminals. The district attorney's office works closely with its key partners to address insurance fraud-related crimes. In 2016, there were 151 cases prosecuted for motor vehicle theft-related activities: 136 misdemeanor arrests and 15 felony arrests. Many of the felony defendants faced multiple counts, including some involving illegal drugs and homicides.

In one instance, a vehicle theft investigation in the summer of 2014 resulted in a homicide prosecution. The defendant burglarized a home and stole the keys to a 2004 Nissan Altima. He was arrested after he called the vehicle owners and arranged an exchange for the car. Although the car was returned, the original keys were not and on August 30, the defendant stole the vehicle again. It was recovered several houses away from the location of a double homicide that occurred on August 31, 2016. The defendant was subsequently sentenced to life in prison for the homicides.

In another case, an individual was arrested for stealing a vehicle left running with a 3-month old baby inside. The car was spotted crossing the Verrazano-Narrows bridge and was found abandoned in Brooklyn with the baby still inside, unharmed. The defendant was charged with grand larceny, unlawful imprisonment, and acting in a manner injurious to a child younger than 17. He pleaded guilty in March 2017 and awaits sentencing.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	0	Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	3
Fraud Investigations Initiated	0	Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	3
Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	349*	Restitution Ordered	\$0

\* Reporting agency-wide arrests because grant funds are utilized for post-arrest investigation and prosecution.

## **New York City Police Department (NYPD) Auto Crime Division**

The NYPD Auto Crime Division is part of the Criminal Enterprise Division of the Detective Bureau. Comprised of approximately 90 members, its mission is to reduce the incidence of motor vehicle theft and motor vehicle insurance fraud within New York City through a coordinated approach involving law enforcement, crime analysis, and prosecution. The Auto Crime Division utilizes an integrated approach to prevent motor vehicle crime as well as to detect, investigate, and prosecute these crimes.

## 2016 Activities

The Auto Crime Division utilizes several strategies in combatting motor vehicle related crime. The unit conducts sting operations, mobile surveillance, deployment of license plate readers, and photographic identification of vehicles to detect and investigate motor vehicle crime. The unit also analyzes complaint reports to identify potential cases of insurance fraud. The unit is also involved in special programs, including the Multi-Agency Response to Community Hotspots program and the Get Legit or Quit program.

Grant funds help support the NYPD Auto Crime School, which provides advanced law enforcement training in motor vehicle-related crime. There were 43 trainings conducted with 1,937 attendees in

2016. Through courses such as Vehicle Identification, Insurance Fraud, and others, students received classroom instruction as well as physical hands-on training while earning college credits. In 2016, the number of vehicles reported stolen in New York City reached an all-time low of 6,335, suggesting the effectiveness of the Auto Crime Division’s strategies.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	70	Fraud Investigations Initiated	20
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts	6,335	Crashes Investigated/Fraud Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles	2,727	Claims Withdrawn/Denied due to Investigation	11
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent *	20	Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	407

\* This statistic was not tracked agency-wide, grant funded numbers are reported.

### **NYPD Fraudulent Collision Investigation Squad**

The Fraudulent Collision Investigation Squad (FCIS) used \$100,000 to fund training, overtime for uniformed members, and costs incurred during investigations.

In March 2016, the Detective Bureau was restructured, establishing a unified command for all investigatory operations. Under the reorganization, the squad became part of the Criminal Enterprise Investigative Section, which conducts long-term investigations of criminal enterprises in conjunction with federal, state, and local partners. The division targets large-scale criminal enterprises, including traditional organized crime, large-scale smuggling, money laundering, health care fraud, and insurance fraud.

#### 2016 Activities

The squad is designed to specifically address all aspects of no-fault insurance fraud within the five boroughs; it does not handle theft investigations. In 2016, the squad investigated staged accidents, purposely caused accidents, fictitious "paper" accidents, and organized insurance fraud rings.

Intelligence and subject identification obtained through short term case investigations were enhanced to develop long-term major case investigations into large scale staged accident rings. The squad also trained NYPD officers, neighboring law enforcement entities and the insurance industry to raise awareness of no-fault fraud.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>	
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Fraud Investigations Initiated	35
Accidents Investigated/Fraud Suspected	35
Claims Withdrawn/Denied due to Investigation	47
Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	24



## Fire Department of New York

The Fire Department of New York (FDNY) used \$124,800 to fund fire marshals assigned to the Auto Fraud Squad. This squad continues to screen all motor vehicle fires throughout the five boroughs to identify priority incidents, particularly those suspected to involve fraud. These investigations focus on forensic examination of a fire scene, evidence recognition and collection, and thoroughly examining documentation of the vehicle's ownership. The squad's strategy is to employ all investigative techniques available in a coordinated effort to identify fraud.

### 2016 Activities

In 2016, the squad implemented a new strategy of using overtime funds to staff fire marshals on overnight shifts so they could respond more rapidly to vehicle fires. This strategy paid off when a pre-dawn vehicle fire broke out on a commercial block with little activity after dark. Fire marshals on the scene recovered surveillance camera video from several nearby commercial businesses showing what appeared to be a woman and a man pull up in the vehicle and in an additional getaway car.

The fire marshals immediately went to the apartment of the woman who was the registered owner of the burned vehicle. Marshals discovered the getaway car from the video with blue latex gloves in the back seat that appeared similar to the ones worn by the suspects. The registered owner and her boyfriend also resembled the individuals in the video and were charged with insurance fraud, arson, and several other charges involving the filing of false documents. The insurance claim was denied by the insurance company. The rapid response by the fire marshals is credited with gathering evidence that may have been lost had there been a delay.

In another case in Queens, fire marshals responding to a report of an accidental fire in a 2016 Honda Accord were able to show that it was deliberately set by the owner, who was injured in the blaze. Fire marshals canvassed for witnesses, video recording systems, and other potential leads. In addition, they collected samples of the interior and tested for the presence of an ignitable liquid.

The vehicle owner claimed he discarded a lit cigarette with the vehicle's door ajar and that it immediately became engulfed in flames. But a forensic examination showed the origin of fire to be inside the passenger compartment and inconsistent with the owner's story. An independent engineering and forensic company also conducted a forensic examination of the vehicle and issued a report that confirmed ignitable liquid was present in the passenger compartment. The Fire Marshals deemed the fire an arson and arrested the owner, who later pled guilty to the insurance fraud. The insurance claim was denied.

In total, the investigations conducted by the FDNY Bureau of Fire Investigations in 2016 resulted in the denial or withdrawal of insurance claims amounting to \$564,477.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Investigations Initiated	249	Motor Vehicle Fires/Fraud Suspected	91
Arrests	82	Fire Insurance Claims Cancelled due to Initiation of Investigation	28
Motor Vehicle Fires	2,185	Value of Claims Denied/Withdrawn	\$564,568

## **New York City Suburban Region**

### **Nassau County District Attorney's Office**

The Nassau County District Attorney's Office used \$114,217 to fund two assistant district attorneys, two investigators, and an assistant dedicated to investigating and prosecuting theft and fraud cases. The office's Vehicle Theft and Fraud Unit was created in 2008 to prosecute motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases while working closely with members of the Nassau County Police Department, the National Insurance Crime Board, and other law enforcement and insurance agencies to detect and reduce the incidence of these crimes.

#### **2016 Activities**

The Nassau County District Attorney's Vehicle Theft and Fraud Unit investigates and prosecutes cases relating to motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud. The office's JustWare Case Management System allows data analysis in tracking vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases to better follow and report these charges, analyze the types of offenses seen, and the dispositions of these matters.

Defendants willing to provide useful intelligence are debriefed by the unit, law enforcement, and other relevant partner agencies. Cooperating defendants can also be employed undercover or aid in providing a basis for search warrants which are useful in stolen motor vehicles and auto parts investigations. One such example involved a staged accident ring that used a U-Haul van in a planned collision and resulted in the 2015 arrest of the ringleader and three co-conspirators. In 2016, one of the defendants was debriefed and agreed to cooperate. As a result, the ringleader pleaded guilty to the top count of fourth-degree insurance fraud; all three co-conspirators pleaded to insurance fraud crimes.

The unit's prosecution strategies and tactics are similar to those used in prosecuting narcotics offenders: Street level offenders arrested for auto insurance fraud are treated like street level dealers. Implementing a vertical prosecution strategy, unit prosecutors monitor and supervise lower level vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases, while directly handling cases involving higher level offenders and crime rings.

The unit coordinated with the Nassau County Police Department's Vehicle Theft Squad in prosecuting thefts from Nassau storage lots, including a case where a defendant was arrested for stealing five new vehicles from a local dealership. The dealership lost more than \$162,000 as a result. The unit also coordinated with the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office to recover many of the stolen vehicles and lodge additional charges in that jurisdiction. Last year, a defendant in the case pleaded guilty to a top count of second-degree grand larceny. In another example of coordination, the unit aids the Nassau County Police in their effort to deter the widespread theft of motor vehicle parts by seeking top count felony pleas in these cases. In 2016, a defendant arrested for stealing numerous tire rims from a dealership pleaded guilty to the top counts of third-degree grand larceny.

The unit also coordinated with the National Insurance Crime Bureau and FDNY to prosecute a defendant on a count of fourth-degree insurance fraud related to an "owner give-up" arson of a vehicle. During the sentencing phase of these cases, unit prosecutors emphasize that these crimes are not victimless, and leniency only perpetuates the problem.

A bilingual investigator with the unit worked with the district attorney's Immigrant Fraud investigations to prosecute an individual who was arrested in 2016 for securing fraudulent insurance policies for immigrant clients by using false out-of-state addresses. The defendant later pleaded guilty to the top count of third-degree grand larceny and the prosecutor was able to seize \$118,000 from her bank accounts, including \$100,000 that was used for restitution.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	7	Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	0
Fraud Investigations Initiated	7	Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	9
Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	9	Restitution Ordered	\$59,537

## **Nassau County Police Department**

The Nassau County Police Department used \$145,783 to fund overtime and training for officers, detectives, supervisors, and intelligence analysts. This award allows police to conduct numerous operations designed to prevent, deter and reduce the incidence of motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud within the county.

### 2016 Activities

The Nassau County Police Department, in collaboration with the Nassau County District Attorney's Office, tailored a strategy to prevent, deter, and reduce the incidence of motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud. Dubbed the Surveillance Apprehension Vehicle Enforcement program, this strategy involves detectives, police officers, intelligence analysts, and supervisors throughout the county incorporating intelligence-based policing to perform targeted and comprehensive enforcement and investigations.

Intelligence analysts mapped the locations of motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud crime and created bulletins utilized by officers and detectives to conduct targeted and enhanced enforcement efforts. This included both overt and covert operations at locations where a high incidence of stolen autos and larcenies from autos were occurring. Additionally, license plate readers were used to detect stolen cars and license plates in locations with a high frequency of auto theft. These efforts led to several arrests and vehicle recoveries.

Detectives also utilized grant funds to conduct a wide variety of enforcement and investigation activities, including a regular review of theft activity, examining stolen vehicle reports and field interviews, checking national databases for theft and scrap information, and visiting scrap yards and dismantlers to ensure proper disposal of vehicles and correct use of MV-35 forms. Detectives continue to review ongoing stolen auto crime patterns and trends in Nassau County, such as the increase in thefts of Ford Econoline trucks, which have lax security features and are often scrapped for cash, dismantled for parts, or repurposed for dollar van drivers. This pattern has crossed over to other jurisdictions, including New York City and Suffolk County. Detectives have shared information with the NYPD and Suffolk County Police yielding positive results.

Another pattern is the theft of new vehicles from storage lots located at the Belmont Race Track. The lots contain thousands of new vehicles and some dealerships have lax vehicle key control, with few safeguards in place to protect their property. These stolen vehicles were indexed with the National Insurance Crime Bureau and the NYPD Auto Crime Division, which has resulted in several arrests.

Intra-agency coordination and collaboration is an overarching component of Nassau County's motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud strategy. The department continues to develop and build relationships with other local, state and federal agencies to bring cases to a successful resolution.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	113	Fraud Investigations Initiated	12
Thefts Reported	488	Accidents Investigated/Fraud Suspected	1
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles	324	Claims Withdrawn/Denied due to Investigation	1
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent	29	Arrests for MVTIF offenses	25

### **Suffolk County District Attorney's Office**

The Suffolk County District Attorney's Office has a Labor, Insurance and Revenue Crimes Bureau that targets white collar crimes, including insurance fraud and motor vehicle theft. The district attorney used \$293,010 to fund four positions: two senior assistant district attorneys, a detective investigator and a paralegal.

The unit is supervised by a division chief overseeing the entire bureau, one bureau chief, one deputy bureau chief, and ten prosecutors dealing with motor vehicle theft, motor vehicle insurance fraud, and labor crimes.

The bureau has allowed investigators and prosecutors to strengthen resources and knowledge while achieving an increased level of coordination, experience and expertise in combating vehicle-related crimes. The bureau prosecutes cases related to insurance fraud and motor vehicle theft generated by the Suffolk County Police Department, the New York State Police, and the east end village police departments.

The bureau also handles referrals from the state Department of Motor Vehicles, the state Department of Financial Services, the National Insurance Crime Bureau, and insurance carriers.

### 2016 Activities

The success of the bureau's investigations relies heavily on collaboration between different law enforcement units and industry partners. In 2016, the bureau recovered \$11,455 to an insurer who paid on a fraudulent motor vehicle insurance claim, and \$165,515 in restitution to the victims of the motor vehicle theft cases, including vehicle owners, dealerships, and insurance companies.

Last year, the office concluded an investigation into thefts of mostly brand new vehicles from dealer storage yards. The dealerships were unaware that vehicles were being removed by two individuals and sold at a covert location, where firearms, narcotics, and other stolen property were located. Undercover investigators purchased 17 motor vehicles that were stolen from dealerships in Nassau County. The defendants also committed insurance fraud by reporting one of their personal vehicles stolen and filing a claim with the insurance company, when they had turned the vehicle over to the undercover detective several days earlier.

During the investigation, the defendants often bragged about their access to millions of dollars of vehicle inventory and claimed that they could also sell firearms. These conversations with the undercover detective were captured on surveillance along with phone and text conversations. The defendants were subsequently indicted on numerous charges including criminal possession of stolen property in the second and third degrees and insurance fraud; both later pleaded guilty to felonies. The approximate

vehicle inventory recovered from the three dealership victims because of this long-term investigation was \$509,595.

The District Attorney’s Office also had a successful year combating motor vehicle insurance fraud. The bureau handled a notable case involving a broker and her corporation that engaged in several distinct schemes that defrauded customers, a financing company, and several insurance companies. The defendant falsified premium funding contracts by inducing the financing company to fund insurance policies that purported to be for customers of her agency –usually corporations –and thereafter collected fees from both the financing company and the customers for policies she kept for herself. The defendant and her brokerage company were indicted for the theft of more than \$1 million in falsely financed insurance coverage for policies that were never actually purchased. The 174-count indictment included 27 instances of forged financing contracts, each contract representing funds that were stolen from the financing company.

In another related scheme, the broker collected premium payments from customers for various insurance policies that did not exist because she never completed the necessary paperwork to obtain the desired coverage. She furthered this scheme by creating falsified vehicle insurance cards and liability insurance coverage certificates. These false documents were produced to wrongly convince unsuspecting customers that they had coverage in place. But the scheme unraveled after some of her customers began receiving suspension notices from the state Department of Motor Vehicles for lapses in coverage; while others had claims denied by carriers for lack of liability coverage.

In addition, the broker made misclassifications and fraudulent misrepresentations to an insurance company regarding the number and type of vehicles included on commercial vehicle policies sold to unsuspecting customers. The insurer did not cover fleet vehicles or certain types of heavy commercial vehicles, so the defendant purposely misclassified them as light trucks to obtain coverage. In several instances, the number of vehicles were also misclassified to avoid being deemed a “fleet.” The broker pleaded guilty in December 2016. She is expected to spend up to six years in prison and pay more than \$1.78 million in restitution.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	11	Indictments for MVTIF offenses	62
Fraud Investigations Initiated	11	Convictions for MVTIF offenses	63
Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	204	Restitution Ordered	\$41,610

**Suffolk County Police Department**

The Suffolk County Police Department used \$133,233 to fund the overtime needed to operate the program and for training. The department employs an intelligence-based and data-driven approach to investigating motor vehicle and insurance fraud crime. The Property Recovery Section of the department is staffed by a detective sergeant and four detectives who coordinate vehicle theft and insurance fraud investigations along with a detective sergeant assigned to the district attorney’s office.

2016 Activities

There were 1,275 vehicles reported stolen in Suffolk County in 2016, which was 54 less than in 2015. The vehicle recovery rate was 77 percent –a 2 percent increase over the previous year. The department continued its model of intelligence-based policing, with field officers assigned to each

detective squad to debrief individuals arrested. These debriefings contain general questions related to the subject's knowledge of criminal activity, and can be directed to any specific area of interest based on crime trends and geographical areas of concern. The results of these debriefings are transmitted to the respective unit for follow up on actionable intelligence.

Detectives assigned to the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office concluded an undercover investigation into the sale of stolen vehicles with the arrest of one subject in connection with 14 vehicle thefts.

Investigators also worked with the state Department of Motor Vehicles to arrest of 20 individuals on charges relating to the possession and use of fraudulent documents or falsifying information when submitting applications for various documentation or licenses. The department's Property Recovery Section launched 59 insurance fraud investigations, which resulted in 68 felony arrests. This section also arrested 18 individuals for possessing or filing false documents.

Detectives continued a long-term vertical prosecution strategy involving the undercover purchase of stolen vehicles, some of which were suspected of being involved in insurance fraud. Other arrests included a suspect creating and selling fraudulent insurance cards; a body shop owner billing for new parts, but instead replacing them with used parts or not at all; and a subject charged with possessing a fraudulent New Jersey registration certificate and five counts of criminal possession of a forged instrument in relation to identity theft crimes. These cases are ongoing.

Training was conducted for department personnel and other county law enforcement officers. Topics included the timely identification of possible insurance fraud by first responders, identifying and investigating possible motor vehicle theft, and the identification and investigation of motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud as it relates to the enforcement activities of the Park Police.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	92	Fraud Investigations Initiated	59
Thefts Reported	1,275	Accidents Investigated/Fraud Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles	1,243	Claims Withdrawn/Denied due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent	5	Arrests for MVTIF offenses	63

### **Westchester County District Attorney's Office**

The Westchester County District Attorney's Office used \$288,500 to fund an Auto Crimes Unit with a senior assistant prosecutor and two police investigators. Starting in 2015, a crime analyst was added to the unit and works in partnership with a similar squad at the Yonkers Police Department. In addition to pursuing its own investigations, the unit provides daily assistance to the county's 42 police departments on a variety of levels.

#### **2016 Activities**

The Westchester County Auto Crimes Unit was extremely busy in 2016 investigating and prosecuting cases and collaborating with law enforcement partners. There was a marked increase in identity theft cases, a trend that impacted the theft of motor vehicles –especially high-end vehicles.

These crimes are perpetrated by organized crime and small sophisticated groups of individuals. With enhanced security features, most high-end vehicles are extremely difficult to steal without a key. But by using identity theft, an individual or group can fraudulently purchase and drive away with a luxury vehicle before the dealership or financing company can recognize the scam.

In September 2015, four individuals entered an area dealership to purchase a new sedan worth \$233,440. Two used stolen identities, social security numbers, forged passports, and forged driver's licenses to obtain financing to make the fraudulent purchase. These individuals also forged the victims' signatures on applications and purchase documents; one even brought \$9,900 to the dealership as a down payment.

The ring leader of the scheme monitored the progress of the sale by phone, and then e-mailed the insurance binder for the car to the salesman showing the vehicle insured and registered to one of the stolen identities. Once successfully purchased, this individual arrived at the dealership, received the keys, and then drove away with the car. The aim of this fraud was to re-sell the vehicles out of state. This vehicle was recovered in Texas after being resold. The investigation revealed that similar high-end vehicle identity theft scams were carried out in other parts of New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Arizona, California, and Texas. The defendants were caught and admitted to identity theft and grand larceny. They received sentences ranging from time served up to 4 years in state prison.

Additionally, the unit investigated numerous vehicle thefts, including a stolen classic vehicle valued at more than \$1 million. The unit also collaborated with various law enforcement partners, investigated damage enhancement by an auto body shop, owner give-up fraud, and medical mill activity. These investigations are ongoing. The unit also hosted six collaborative meetings with 42 law enforcement agencies in Westchester County to keep abreast of recent auto crime trends and to share intelligence. The meetings have also served as in-house training for police officers throughout the county. Trainers included personnel from the state Department of Motor Vehicles, National Insurance Crime Bureau, federal Homeland Security, Yonkers Police Department, New York State Police, CarFax, and unit personnel.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	8	Indictments for MVTIF offenses	29
Fraud Investigations Initiated	5	Convictions for MVTIF offenses	78
Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	182	Restitution Ordered	\$0

### **Yonkers Police Department**

The Yonkers Police Department used \$132,950 to fund a full-time detective and overtime to support additional hours needed for complex investigations. The money also funds training. Working closely with other state and local agencies, the department investigates reports of stolen vehicles, cars with stolen parts, altered vehicle identification numbers, bogus registration and inspection stickers, and out-of-state dealer plates or other suspicious tags.

#### 2016 Activities

The department has a designated specialized auto crimes unit, including a full-time detective dedicated to motor vehicle theft and pursuing fraud investigations. The unit works closely with area law enforcement and prosecutors to shut down chop shops, recover stolen autos and parts and arrest the

offenders. The assigned detective worked 173 hours of overtime to conduct investigations into auto theft plots. Yonkers had 247 reported motor vehicle thefts in 2016, and the unit was instrumental in recovering 147 vehicles - 60 percent of those stolen.

The assigned detective worked with the county’s crime analyst to assess trends in auto theft, such as using trucks to steal cars and motorcycles from dealership lots, stolen cars being shipped through the Dominican Republic to other foreign countries, and the theft of construction vehicles.

The unit continues to investigate trends in insurance fraud, such as falsely reporting a car stolen, staged accidents, enhanced damage to vehicles, and cases of fraudulent documents –bad checks, bad plates, bogus licenses and registrations, and other counterfeit documents. The unit uncovers many of these incidents while investigating car accidents and reports of stolen autos. Often they receive tips from patrol officers trained by unit members on how to identify stolen auto parts, counterfeit paperwork and stickers, and to identify cases of fraud.

Motorcycle theft continues to be a major issue in Yonkers. The unit detective worked extensively with state police on a local case with a chop shop located at Morningside and Ridge Avenue and with the FBI in Connecticut on a stolen auto investigation that resulted in the recovery of four vehicles.

There has been a rise in fraudulent paperwork in relation to stolen motor vehicles. Trends in motor vehicle theft center on the use of fraudulent documentation, such as using fake registration and fake title documents to have cars released.

There is also a rise in identity theft to purchase cars using stolen credit cards or stolen money orders. The auto crimes detective investigated three identity theft cases with the U.S. Postal Service, which resulted in one arrest and a warrant related to insurance fraud. He also worked on another investigation of identity theft where a passport was obtained and one arrest was made by the U.S. Department of State.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	15	Fraud Investigations Initiated	3
Thefts Reported	247	Accidents Investigated/Fraud Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles	147	Claims Withdrawn/Denied due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent	0	Arrests for MVTIF Offenses*	691

\* Agency-wide arrests because grant-funded arrests were not tracked.

## **Western New York**

### **Buffalo Police Department**

The Buffalo Police Department’s General Investigation Unit is part of the Detective Division and dedicated to investigating complaints related to motor vehicle theft, arson and fraud. This unit used \$107,400 to fund a full-time detective and travel and training costs to enhance the program’s effectiveness.



## 2016 Activities

The detective assigned to the unit collaborated closely with several other agencies to combat motor vehicle theft and fraud. Much of the motor vehicle theft in Buffalo involves older vehicles which are less secure and are often targeted to be stripped for parts. In one notable investigation, the detective worked closely with a National Insurance Crime Bureau investigator to solve a rash thefts involving Hondas from the late 1990s. After reviewing data analytics and briefing patrol, three suspects were arrested at an address in Buffalo's C District —an area where several suspected chop shops operate. These individuals were charged with auto stripping, possession of burglar's tools, criminal possession of stolen property and unauthorized use of a motor vehicle. Investigators recovered six stolen vehicles along with copper wire worth \$15,000. The detective, district detectives and insurance company investigators linked additional unauthorized use of vehicles and stolen plates to this ring. As the investigation continued, a set of "jiggle" keys —tools used to gain entry and start a vehicle —were recovered along with additional Hondas. The investigation is ongoing.

The detective also led an investigation into the theft of rental cars from Buffalo's airport lot. Some of these stolen vehicles were then used in the commission of crimes, including several shootings. The detective, a Cheektowaga Police auto theft detective, and investigators from the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority met with the rental agency's area manager regarding numerous issues with their recordkeeping and failure to adequately track their vehicles. Investigators have reviewed the hot sheet of stolen vehicles for possible links to intelligence developed by district detectives. The detective also worked with E District tracking a person of interest on Facebook who was renting stolen rental cars from the airport; four men were observed near the house where one of the rentals was retrieved, but refused to cooperate with police. The investigation into these thefts continues.

A tire theft ring plaguing the city's Allentown and West Side neighborhoods during the summer was successfully shut down, and a suspect was charged with multiple counts of grand larceny. The ring initially targeted poorer areas of the city, but spread to include more affluent areas as well. Newer vehicles were targeted for their higher re-sale value. Although modern car alarms help to prevent opportunistic vehicle larcenies, wheels and rims can be taken without triggering the alarms.

The unit detective worked with state Department of Motor Vehicles and National Insurance Crime Bureau investigators to thwart an automotive shop issuing fake registration stickers, forged vehicle documents and selling stolen car parts. An informant in the case also provided information about a gang member involved in drugs and guns who was working with the auto shop owner. The Buffalo Police Department's Intel Unit was brought in and an arrest is pending.

In another case, a Florida resident electronically tracked his stolen 2015 Cadillac Escalade from Florida to Buffalo. The detective was notified and within the hour, patrol officers located the vehicle, which had a New York dealer plate. Further investigation showed the VIN number did not match. When the new 'owner' returned to the vehicle, he claimed that he obtained the car at an auction in Georgia. The car was impounded; the VIN number turned out to be counterfeit, and additional evidence was developed resulting in a call to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, which took over the case. Information developed in Buffalo resulted in three arrests in Florida.

City police launched a joint investigation stemming from a hit and run incident in Buffalo and an individual from South Carolina who reported her vehicle was stolen while she was away on vacation. She filed a report on Sept. 26, 2016, claiming the theft happened sometime after Sept.16, 2016. Buffalo Police cameras caught the accident, along with footage of a male exiting the vehicle. License plate reader hits indicated the vehicle was in Buffalo prior to being reported stolen from South Carolina. Investigators determined the owner reported the theft to protect a relative who was involved in the crash. The car was recovered and the owner notified. Evidence from the investigation in Buffalo was

then forwarded to authorities in South Carolina to arrest the vehicle owner for false reporting.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	77	Fraud Investigations Initiated	47
Thefts Reported	838	Accidents Investigated/Fraud Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles	701	Claims Withdrawn/Denied due to Investigation	2
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent	56	Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	5

### **Cheektowaga Police Department**

The Cheektowaga Police Department used \$38,542 for police overtime and training. The department has 10 of its 19 detectives handling motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases, including one assigned to lead the Auto Theft Squad. This detective coordinates motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud investigations for the bureau and assigns cases to other detectives. This strategy has been in place for several years and has successfully reduced motor vehicle theft and fraud cases.

#### 2016 Activities

The department has continued to focus on investigations into motor vehicle thefts and larcenies of property and auto parts from motor vehicles. The department also investigates activities such as insurance fraud, forged vehicle identification numbers, and forged titles. The grant provided for 620 hours of overtime for these investigations and to combat motor vehicle-related crime.

Interagency cooperation and intelligence sharing are main components of grant activities. A close working relationship with outside agencies proves to be beneficial for both Cheektowaga and the surrounding municipalities.

Examples include assisting the Erie County Sheriff's Office with a switched VIN number on a stolen vehicle; assisting U.S. Homeland Security at the Peace Bridge examining 247 motorcycles; assisting the state Department of Transportation with a heavy equipment checkpoint examining 47 trailers and 12 pieces of equipment; assisting Buffalo Police at the Juneteenth Festival examining 12 vehicles and 4 motorcycles; assisting Lancaster Police with examining 67 motorcycles, 46 vehicles, and 11 trailers at a traffic checkpoint; and meeting regularly with representatives from the Erie County District Attorney's Office, Buffalo Police Auto Theft Squad, and Buffalo Fire Marshall's Office.

The grant also allows crime scene detectives to photograph and process every recovered stolen motor vehicle. Evidence collected is submitted to the Erie County Central Police Services Laboratory for further processing and comparison. A total of 46 vehicles were processed leading to 2 fingerprint hits in SABIS. These vehicles wouldn't have been processed without grant funding.

The assigned auto theft detective attended the regional and statewide motor vehicle theft meetings along with the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators' Conference in Ottawa. The detective also instructs new recruits at the Erie County Central Police Services Training Academy.

<b>2016 Grant Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b><i>Performance Measure</i></b>	<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>Performance Measure</i></b>	<b><i>Total</i></b>
Investigations Initiated- Theft	77	Investigations Initiated- Fraud	0
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	143	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	54	Claims Withdrawn or Denied due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	0	Total Arrests for MVTIF offenses	25

### **Erie County District Attorney's Office**

The Erie County District Attorney's Office used \$105,258 to fund a full-time assistant district attorney and training. The assistant district attorney assigned to handle motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases is supported by the staff of the Special Investigations and Prosecutions Bureau.

The prosecutor works closely with detectives from the Buffalo and Cheektowaga police departments, while also meeting with other law enforcement agencies throughout the area to collaborate with ongoing investigations. The prosecutor vertically prosecutes the more serious motor vehicle theft crimes and all the insurance fraud cases in Erie County.

#### 2016 Activities

The district attorney's office worked closely with the state Department of Financial Services and special investigative units from various insurance companies to convict an individual arrested for separate double dipping claims and who was part of a larger insurance fraud ring involving staged and phantom accidents. Using the same vehicle, the defendant submitted claims that had already been paid by insurance, which allowed him to wrongfully obtain \$2,146 from one insurer and \$3,621 from another. The two sets of claims were for two different damage occurrences on the same vehicle. As a result, the individual pleaded to two counts of grand larceny and three other felony charges, including insurance fraud.

In conjunction with prosecutors in Niagara and Monroe counties, Erie County investigated a case involving an individual who submitted fraudulent lien releases. The defendant bought a vehicle in Niagara County and then filed a MV-82 with the state Department of Motor Vehicles listing Wells Fargo as lienholder. He then applied for a duplicate title in Erie County and submitted a fraudulent lien release –purportedly from Wells Fargo –and obtained a clean title. He then listed the vehicle for sale on Craigslist and sold it to a dealership, which ran the VIN through Carfax and found no liens. He committed a similar crime in Niagara County for a vehicle sold in Monroe County. He ultimately admitted to attempted grand larceny and was ordered to pay restitution. Additionally, he has committed fraud in Illinois and will be sentenced as a second felony offender based on his out-of-state convictions.

The prosecutor's office also obtained felony forgery and identity theft convictions against an individual who used the identity of a mentally challenged acquaintance to obtain a non-driver's identification and a driver's license, which were both used to purchase, finance and register vehicles. The fraud was discovered when the individual defaulted on the loans and the victim was sued. The office also obtained three felony convictions for scheme to defraud in connection with the case.

In another case, prosecutors secured convictions against an individual who stole a car and caused a three-car, personal-injury crash. The individual left the scene of the accident and attempted to evade

police by breaking into a residence and assaulting the homeowner. The individual was convicted of burglary, assault, driving while intoxicated and leaving the scene of a personal injury accident. He was sentenced to serve up to four years in state prison.

Prosecutors also obtained a felony conviction for an individual who claimed on an MV-35 form to be the owner of a vehicle that he scrapped. MV-35 fraud is a common occurrence in Erie County.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	16	Indictments for MVTIF offenses	4
Fraud Investigations Initiated	21	Convictions for MVTIF offenses	21
Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	0	Restitution Ordered	\$24,067

### **Niagara County District Attorney’s Office**

The Niagara County District Attorney's Office used \$109,966 to support a Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Unit consisting of a full-time assistant district attorney and a full-time investigator. The assistant prosecutor and investigator collaborate with all law enforcement agencies operating within the county as well as other insurance fraud investigators. Investigations by law enforcement agencies are referred to the assistant district attorney for vertical prosecution to ensure all cases are prosecuted to the fullest extent possible.

#### 2016 Activities

Niagara County renewed its efforts to identify, combat, and deter motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud under its new administration. The dedicated motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud prosecutor and criminal investigator continue to attend all related training offered by the state Division of Criminal Justice Services, New York Prosecutors Training Institute, National Insurance Crime Bureau, and New York State Chapter of Special Investigation Units.

The assigned prosecutor coordinated with the administrative officers of the Niagara County Sheriff's Office, State Police, Niagara Falls Police Department, Lockport Police Department, and North Tonawanda Police Department to further develop and encourage consistent handling of motor vehicle crimes. The prosecutor’s office adopted a new policy for charging and handling motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases and then shared it with other law enforcement agencies throughout the county, along with agencies in neighboring Erie County. The policy emphasizes deterrence of motor vehicle crimes. Patrol officers are encouraged to recognize and charge crimes relating to unauthorized use of a motor vehicle and auto stripping. Such charges are reviewed by the unit prosecutor and criminal investigator. These charges are emphasized during plea negotiations so that convictions can be used to enhance future charges to the predicate felony level.

The unit’s assistant district attorney handles felony motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud charges from grand jury presentation through prosecution and sentencing. Assigned staff provide case updates and monitor restitution requests with the victims and victims' insurance agencies while cases are pending.

The unit’s prosecution efforts are best exemplified by a case involving a ring of criminals breaking into dozens of cars in the tourist area of Niagara Falls. Niagara Falls Police interviewed a suspect, who then admitted to breaking into more than 90 cars. With assistance from the Niagara Crime Analysis

Center, the prosecutor was able to compile all reported break-ins from the reported timeframe and locations where the suspect and his ring were operating. The prosecutor secured multiple felony convictions resulting in the individual agreeing to repay thousands of dollars in restitution for damage to vehicles and stolen contents. The decision to pursue the matter aggressively was made with Niagara Falls Police in part because of a pattern of recidivism by similar offenders who were not prosecuted as aggressively. The goal was to prevent the individual and others from committing other more serious motor vehicle theft-related crimes.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	143	Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	11
Fraud Investigations Initiated	0	Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	115
Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	213	Restitution Ordered	\$110,016

### **Niagara County Sheriff's Office**

The Niagara County Sheriff's Office used \$19,050 for staff overtime and necessary training. The Stolen Vehicle Task Force within the sheriff's office includes deputies, supervisors, and investigators tasked with reviewing cases, trends, and field intelligence to combat theft and fraud. The sheriff's office continues to collaborate with other law enforcement agencies to reduce theft and fraud throughout Western New York.

#### 2016 Activities

The task force continued to work diligently to curb motor vehicle theft, larcenies from vehicles, and insurance fraud. The number of vehicles stolen remain at record lows. There were 43 reports of stolen vehicles, with an arrest made in 25 of those cases. A suspect is identified in at least five others.

As a general operating principle, all stolen vehicle cases that are not immediately solved are assigned to an investigator for follow-up. Overtime funds are used to conduct supplemental questioning, to secure signed theft affidavits from victims, and for additional investigative activities. Cases of widespread thefts from vehicles, suspicious vehicle fires, and other related motor vehicle crimes are also reviewed and assigned for further investigation. By studying locations, trends, and developing other intelligence, road patrol can be stationed in areas deemed to be "hot spots" of criminal activity.

The sheriff's office works closely with the Niagara County District Attorney's Office to resolve cases with the highest possible charge. Working with neighboring agencies is also important in combatting theft. For instance, one incident involved a deputy locating two individuals committing larcenies from vehicles in Newfane. The vehicle they were operating was stolen from the city of Lockport, and the two suspects were subsequently captured after a vehicle pursuit. Their arrest cleared dozens of vehicle larcenies in Newfane, Hartland, and Lockport.

In another example of multi-jurisdictional cooperation, investigators arrested an individual who was stealing work trucks from job sites and trucking companies and then using them to commit dozens of burglaries on storage lots, at auto shops, and from trailers. The sheriff's office shared intelligence and information with other area agencies, since the convicted felon operated in most counties in Western New York. Sheriff's deputies eventually caught him with a stolen truck committing a burglary at an auto shop in the town of Wheatfield.

The task force also apprehended an auto stripper who had stolen two sets of high-end tires and rims from a local dealership. Using an undercover operative, the thief was arrested when he brought the stolen items to a predetermined meeting location to sell them. The defendant pleaded guilty to auto stripping.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	19	Fraud Investigations Initiated	2
Reported Thefts	43	Accidents Investigated/Fraud Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles	41	Claims Withdrawn/Denied due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent	0	Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	16

### **Niagara Falls Police Department**

The Niagara Falls Police Department used \$28,900 to fund staff overtime and training. The Motor Vehicle Theft and Fraud Unit is managed as a special operation by the captain of the Criminal Investigation Division with emphasis on investigations and appropriate follow-up. In addition, the unit collaborates with the Traffic Division to identify suspicious accident reports and possible fraud cases.

#### 2016 Activities

The grant funded approximately 400 hours of overtime for detectives working on stolen motor vehicle investigations. In addition, the funding allowed for 112 hours of surveillance by plain clothes officers to support the detectives with their investigations and 55 hours of overtime for the detective lieutenant to complete necessary documentation for court proceedings. Through analysis by the Niagara Crime Analysis Center, the unit has utilized their overtime hours to target specific hotspots and individuals believed to be involved in motor vehicles thefts.

Grant funded activities directly led to the recovery of 55 stolen vehicles, 18 arrests for motor vehicle theft or fraud, and the cancellation or withdrawal of three insurance claims.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	255	Fraud Investigations Initiated	7
Reported Thefts	188	Accidents Investigated/Fraud Suspected	7
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles	159	Claims Withdrawn/Denied due to Investigation	3
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent	3	Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	18

## **Finger Lakes Region**

### **Monroe County District Attorney's Office**

The Monroe County District Attorney's Office used \$111,001 to fund the Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Bureau, which is staffed by an assistant district attorney and an investigator. The bureau remains a vital component of Monroe County's efforts to reduce automobile theft and insurance fraud.

#### **2016 Activities**

Monroe County has a Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Task Force, with representation from the district attorney's office, the Rochester Police Department, and the Monroe County Sheriff's Office. These agencies coordinate efforts to reduce motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud and assist outside agencies with investigations. Task force members share a common offender database –Monroe Rochester Identification System –which facilitates information sharing. The task force hosts monthly meetings to share information on trends, crimes, and investigations related to motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud. New referrals from the state Department of Financial Services Criminal Investigations Unit are reviewed by task force members and assigned to investigators working under the grant.

The prosecutor's office has developed a standard supporting deposition form used by officers when responding to motor vehicle theft. This standardization allows investigators to better analyze the nature of thefts, including offender profiles, methods used, and gang affiliations, as well as the most common times, locations, and types of vehicles involved. The office also works to educate law enforcement agencies regarding the state's auto stripping statute.

Prosecutors severely restrict plea reductions in felony insurance fraud cases, with the most serious of these limitations being directed at repeat offenders. The prosecutor assigned to the program also works to pursue and maximize restitution to insurance providers, even in cases where an auto insurance fraud charge is settled due to a plea on another, non-auto insurance theft charge. This policy is particularly important, as such pleas regularly occur in cases of falsified theft reports and staged accidents, which can result in significant jail time and long probation terms while providing reduced opportunities for restitution. The office uses the vertical prosecution model for all motor vehicle related crimes in an effort to ensure that these priorities are applied consistently.

Working with the Monroe County Sheriff, the prosecutor's office obtained a guilty plea in a case involving a man who stole a vehicle from a dealership in Henrietta. The individual tried to evade capture, crashed the car into a security gate and fled on foot. With several prior convictions involving misdemeanor auto stripping and drunken driving, he pleaded guilty prior to trial and was sentenced to serve up to four years in prison.

In another case, two men entered a home, removed thousands of dollars of belongings, and then drove a Mercedes sedan out of the garage. After a lengthy investigation involving cell phone data and Facebook posts, two individuals were identified and arrested. Both men pleaded guilty to burglary and received lengthy state prison sentences.

In a case highlighting inter-agency cooperation, an individual stole the title of his ex-girlfriend's car and then fraudulently transferred ownership of the vehicle to register it in his name. The investigation involved the Irondequoit Police, Rochester Police, and the state Department of Motor Vehicles investigators. He was charged with grand larceny, offering false information for filing, falsifying business records and bribing a witness and convicted. He was sentenced to up to six years in prison.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	113	Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	NR*
Fraud Investigations Initiated	5	Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	85
Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	118	Restitution Ordered	\$37,286

\*NR (Not Reported): This information was not tracked.

### **Monroe County Sheriff's Office**

The Monroe County Sheriff's Office used \$34,720 to fund the overtime needed to investigate theft and fraud cases and necessary training. The sheriff's program collaborates with other members of the law enforcement community in Monroe County to reduce motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud within the county.

#### *2016 Activities*

The sheriff's office responded to 153 reported motor vehicle thefts and recovered 115 stolen vehicles. Members of the Motor Vehicle and Insurance Fraud Task Force investigated five cases of possible motor vehicle insurance fraud resulting in a felony arrest. The cases were referred by investigators from the state Department of Financial Services.

The Sheriff's office utilizes coordinated departmental efforts when tracking and identifying pattern crimes, such as motor vehicle theft and larcenies from vehicles, which include auto stripping. Investigators use a computer statistics program to identify pattern crimes so they can be addressed with targeted law enforcement strategies. The Monroe Crime Analysis Center assists in tracking and mapping crime patterns inside and outside the jurisdiction, including those emerging as trends elsewhere. The task force conducts details in the identified areas in an attempt to arrest offenders while they are trying to steal cars, commit car larcenies, and strip vehicles of parts. The task force continues to utilize a GPS unit and SCOUT Alarm –equipment that is often used in conjunction with undercover surveillance and enforcement details.

Monroe County agencies experienced a pattern of thefts of ATV and utility type vehicles from various areas in fall 2016. The sheriff's office received a call for service on Sept. 23, 2016, for two teens actively stealing an ATV from an address on Peck Road in the Town of Parma. Investigators responded and took the suspects into custody. The individuals were charged with grand larceny, burglary, and petit larceny; the arrests effectively ended the rash of ATV and utility vehicle thefts.

In March, an investigator assisted the state Department of Financial Services Criminal Investigations Unit and the Rochester Police Department in a case involving an individual who falsely reported her car stolen on October 11, 2015 –the day after she filed an insurance claim for \$19,156 for the stolen vehicle. The sheriff's investigator arranged a meeting with the suspect and charged her with insurance fraud for filing the false claim. This case clearly demonstrated the benefit of the task force and the interagency cooperation it fosters.



<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	19	Fraud Investigations Initiated	5
Reported Thefts	153	Accidents Investigated/Fraud Suspected	3
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles	115	Claims Withdrawn/ Denied due to Investigation	3
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent	0	Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	8

## **Rochester Police Department**

The Rochester Police Department used \$44,336 to fund overtime for investigations and training in the latest motor vehicle crime trends. The Auto Theft Unit, under the command of the department's Special Operations Division, is responsible for coordinating investigations into motor vehicle related crime initiatives and utilizes personnel from other divisions within the department as needed.

### 2016 Activities

The department's Auto Theft Unit investigator is assigned full-time to the multi-agency Auto Crimes Task Force, which also consists of investigators from the Monroe County District Attorney's Office, the state Department of Motor Vehicles-Field Investigations Division and the state Department of Financial Services Criminal Investigations Unit. Members of the unit routinely attend specialized training to stay abreast of best practices in combatting auto crime. In May 2016, members attended the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators Annual Training Seminar in Ottawa, Canada. In January, unit members delivered auto theft training to 14 police recruits representing seven different law enforcement agencies. Unit members presented the training again in April to 57 police recruits, and in October to 25 University of Rochester Peace Officer recruits. Members also attended 12 Auto Theft Task Force meetings throughout the year.

Grant funding was used by 28 investigators conducting motor vehicle theft investigations and related details. In one case, investigators were asked by a property owner to assist with a severely stripped vehicle that was left on his property by previous tenants who operated a repair garage at the location. The VIN's and most forms of identification had been removed, but investigators ultimately were able to identify it as a 2001 Chevy Tahoe. Department members were able to locate a vehicle registered with a donor VIN from the stripped Tahoe. With the assistance of investigators from the state Department of Motor Vehicles Field Investigations Unit, the re-tagged vehicle was identified as a stolen 2005 Tahoe. The suspect operating the vehicle had registered it in his estranged wife's name. After interview he admitted to switching the VINs and was charged with three counts of forgery.

The grant was also used by seven investigators probing suspected insurance fraud. In one instance, an insured suspect called the police to report vandalism to her vehicle, which was parked in her yard. The responding officer completed a crime report noting minor damage to the vehicle including scratches, dents, and two broken windows. The suspect's insurance company, however, indicated the damage was far greater. Investigators obtained video from the officer's body worn camera that captured images of the vehicle during his preliminary investigation and report. Images from the appraisal showed far greater damage: All but the driver's side windows were broken, all four tires were slashed, there were large dents throughout the vehicle and there was graffiti painted in large letters on each side of the vehicle. Despite the disparity in reports, the individual maintained her claim, but did not file any written instrument to the insurance company. She was charged with attempted grand larceny for trying to fraudulently obtain \$10,099 from the insurance company and her claim was denied.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	60	Fraud Investigations Initiated	18
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts	462	Accidents Investigated/Fraud Suspected	7
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles	403	Claims Withdrawn/Denied due to Investigation	8
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent	16	Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	24

## **Capital Region**

### **Albany Police Department**

The Albany Police Department used \$33,775 to fund overtime and training for officers assigned to its Auto Crimes Task Force. The task force consists of 36 members, including patrol officers, detectives, sergeants, and lieutenants. The task force operates within the department's Criminal Investigation Division, and is supervised by a detective lieutenant and a detective sergeant.

#### **2016 Activities**

The Albany Police Department has worked to solidify and expand its core group of officers and detectives on the Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Task Force. The Auto Crime Task Force worked in concert with the Traffic Safety Unit as well as the Neighborhood Engagement Unit to combat theft. Using the Albany Crime Analysis Center, the Traffic Safety Unit ran enforcement details aimed at operators of motor vehicles who leave their vehicles running unattended. Simultaneously, the Neighborhood Engagement Unit officers were used to educate residents in their geographical zones about the risks of leaving a vehicle unattended. Officers attended neighborhood meetings to discuss crime trends in their neighborhoods.

Scraping, auto stripping, and related crimes remain a trend in Albany. The task force continues to develop relationships with local scrap yards to improve its ability to track stolen motor vehicle property. This has led to partnerships with several scrap yards, which alert the task force to suspicious motor vehicles and parts being sold for scrap. One notable auto stripping case investigated by the task force involved stripping catalytic converters from vehicles. Detectives partnered with outside agencies, including Colonie Police, the Rensselaer County Sheriff's Office and North Greenbush Police to share information and investigate these crimes. This included over 24 hours of surveillance and the eventual arrest of two subjects involved in the thefts.

The task force also actively investigated a string of vehicle thefts from dealerships. The suspect would enter the business under the auspices of purchasing a vehicle, switch the vehicle key with a fake one, and then return after business hours to steal the vehicles. The suspect targeted numerous dealerships on Central Avenue in Albany and Colonie. Through investigation and surveillance, the task force identified the individual involved in the thefts. In Albany alone, the suspect was arrested on two counts of petit larceny, four counts of grand larceny, one count of criminal possession of stolen property and two counts of burglary. One of the stolen vehicles had a value exceeding \$50,000.

The task force also focused on high-profile neighborhoods with high concentrations of city residents and daily visitors and private and city venues, such as the Pine Hills neighborhood and Washington Park. The task force assisted other department units in aggressively patrolling these areas to prevent theft from motor vehicles and other easily preventable motor vehicle thefts.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	1,261*	Fraud Investigations Initiated	0
Reported Thefts	291	Accidents Investigated/Fraud Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles	197	Claims Withdrawn/Denied due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent	0	Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	12

\*Total number of vehicle-related theft reports; investigations were not tracked.

### **Albany County District Attorney's Office**

The Albany County District Attorney used \$65,825 for a part-time assistant district attorney and a part-time supervisory prosecutor. This enabled the office to address appropriate cases through the Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Unit. The unit coordinates with law enforcement agencies in the areas of education, training, detection, investigation and the prosecution of motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases.

#### 2016 Activities

The unit continued efforts to build quality investigations and prosecutions through collaboration with area law enforcement agencies. The first jurisdictional collaborative meeting for Albany County was conducted at the district attorney's office in August 2016, with representatives from the Albany Police, Colonie Police, New York State Police, Albany Crime Analysis Center, Albany Sheriff's Office, National Insurance Crime Bureau and the special investigations units from several insurance companies. The assigned prosecutor now has access to ISO ClaimSearch and will utilize the program to explore uncharged insurance fraud aspects of pending cases. The district attorney's office continues to utilize a vertical prosecution strategy for new and pending cases involving auto theft.

The unit is involved in an ongoing investigation into several auto sales by a local car dealership that is the subject of several complaints filed with the state Department of Motor Vehicles and the New York State Police. These complaints all concern cars sold bearing valid New York State inspection stickers, but with serious mechanical defects. The Department of Motor Vehicles has uncovered several open title sales and that the dealership has failed to maintain proper records. The individual handling the sales at the dealership has a criminal history involving fraud in motor vehicle sales. This investigation is ongoing.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Theft Investigations Initiated	0*	Indictments for MVTIF offenses	31
Fraud Investigations Initiated	0*	Convictions for MVTIF offenses	41
Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	55	Restitution Ordered	\$0

\* Grant funds are not used for investigators, only for prosecution of cases.

## **Statewide**

### **The New York Anti-Car Theft & Fraud Association**

The New York Anti-Car Theft & Fraud Association Inc. is a statewide not-for-profit educational organization whose mission is to reduce auto crime and insurance fraud in New York. The association used \$62,000 to fund the production of training webinars, seminars and conferences. The association also offers educational and training programs, collaborative sharing opportunities, and online resources for law enforcement personnel and for insurance special investigation units and claims personnel. The association provides information to consumers in the areas of motor vehicle theft and fraud, and continues to sponsor and manage training events, meetings and outreach efforts in auto crime prevention and insurance fraud detection and investigations throughout the year.

### **2016 Activities**

The association's training efforts in 2016 concentrated on both vehicle crime and insurance fraud, providing effective professional and hands-on training in theft and fraud investigation and deterrence. The association continues to expand its outreach by improving cooperative working relationships with other associations and with New York State agencies.

The association assisted the state Division of Criminal Justice Services with two regional meetings and the Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Annual Symposium. The association also provided 12 additional training meetings and conferences attended by more than 775 law enforcement officers and representatives from the insurance industry. The association continues to focus its efforts on the following areas:

**Training and Education:** The most effective efforts at combating motor vehicle theft and motor vehicle insurance fraud result when both law enforcement and insurance investigation personnel are aware of the latest techniques and information. The association focused on providing innovative and hands-on training through its seminars, meetings and conferences.

**Collaborative Planning:** There is a wealth of knowledge and experience within the association's membership and affiliated agencies. The association taps into this professional community in joint planning of training seminars for speakers and courses and in sharing its organizational capabilities. This collaborative community includes auto crime experts, experienced law enforcement leaders, and other knowledgeable professionals from the state Department of Financial Services-Insurance Frauds Bureau, the state Attorney General's Office, the FBI, state Department of Motor Vehicles, National Insurance Crime Bureau, New York City Police Department Auto Crime Division, New York State Police and state prosecutors.

**Expanding and Improving Communication:** The association expanded its communication outreach to law enforcement agencies and affiliate organizations across the state through an improved web presence and greater electronic communications. Law enforcement feedback about online needs and interests was solicited at every training session.

**Building Greater Connectivity and Networking:** As an umbrella organization, the association fosters an effective networking arena and forum for sharing information with members including law enforcement agencies, insurance carriers, the state Department of Financial Services Fraud Bureau, the state Department of Motor Vehicles, and many other state agency fraud units. The association also cooperates with other not for profit organizations such as the Northeast Chapter of the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators, New York State Special Investigative Units and New York Prosecutor's Training Institute to encourage a strong networking relationship among them.

The association's Annual State Education Conference and Technology Summit are examples of how these efforts come together. These events allow law enforcement and insurance industry personnel to learn from outstanding law enforcement, legal, state government and insurance company sources. At the association's Tech Summits, hundreds of professionals are exposed to state-of-the-art investigative information and processes, equipment and theories in fighting theft and fraud.

The spirit of cooperation fostered at these conferences and training events continues through the communication networks that are established among law enforcement investigators long after the program concludes. The association's training classes offer attendees the ability to access many different agencies that they may not have contact with during the normal course of business. The association's training seminars have opened new information resources to law enforcement that will aid in their investigations of insurance fraud and other crimes through the sharing of information and expertise.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Seminars, Trainings & Conferences	15	Webinar Trainings Produced	6
Verified Attendees	1,823	Verified Webinar Viewers	98
Agencies Represented	402		
MVT Articles Published	0	MVIF Articles Published	0
Webinars for Law Enforcement Agencies	6	Webinars for Prosecutors' Offices	6

### **New York Prosecutors Training Institute**

The New York Prosecutors Training Institute Inc. used \$38,800 to enhance training for prosecutors and law enforcement professionals in the areas of motor vehicle theft and fraud without cost to participants. Each year the institute hosts approximately 30 conferences, which were attended by more than 2,500 prosecutors last year.

#### 2016 Activities

In 2016, the institute continued to employ a senior attorney with more than 35 years of experience as a prosecutor to direct the motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud programs. The attorney coordinated training presentations, authored an article on motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud in the Empire State Prosecutor magazine, and conducted a webinar. Additionally, he served as a coordinator for assistant district attorneys seeking out prosecutors in other jurisdictions to discuss legal developments relating to motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud. The assigned staff attorney is assisted by seven other institute lawyers as well as the agency's executive, technical, and administrative staff.

In response to developing trends, training in 2016 increased emphasis on the role of developing technologies, both as utilized by criminals, and as tools for use in detecting, investigating, and prosecuting motor vehicle crimes. This emphasis was included in a presentation at the New York State Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention annual conference - "Technology & the 4th Amendment." It was also a central theme in the institute's daylong training in New York City in March entitled "Fire, Fraud and the Fourth."

In addition, the institute's 18th Annual "Summer College" at Syracuse Law School included a two-day course on motor vehicle crime titled "Top Gear." This program included presentations from the state Division of Criminal Justice Services and Crime Analysis Centers; CARFAX; and five experienced motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud prosecutors. The program again focused partly on the acquisition and use of electronic data, computer generated information and digital evidence. An end-of-the-year webinar focused on geolocation and cell phone tracking developments, with a focus on their impact on motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud.

The institute continued to develop and support the Prosecutor's Case Management System, which is now used by the majority of prosecutors' offices in New York to track cases and produce uniform, customized reports. Legislative changes that took effect were incorporated into the institute's "Crime Time Online," which provides updated information regarding charging and sentencing options. Prosecutor's Encyclopedia continues to expand and is available to prosecutors from all county district attorneys' offices, as well as registered users from other agencies. In addition to including millions of articles of interest to prosecutors and serving as a portal for legal research, the Prosecutor's Encyclopedia included 178,061 resources related to motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud, including 8,087 added in 2016.

The institute continued to network, exchange information, share resources, and attend meetings with other organizations combating motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud, including the New York State Police, FBI, NYPD, National Insurance Crime Bureau, New York's Crime Analysis Center network and the New York Anti-Car Theft and Fraud Association. Finally, the institute continued to assist prosecutors throughout the state by responding to questions and requests for technical and legal advice on motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud matters, providing direct assistance on 21 separate cases.

<b>2016 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</b>			
<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Seminars/Trainings/Conferences	3	Webinar Trainings Produced	1
Verified Attendees	134	Verified Webinar Training Viewers	29
Agencies Represented	39		
MVT Articles Published	1	MVIF Articles Published	0
Webinars for Law Enforcement	1	Webinars for Prosecutors	1

**2016 Reported Incidents of Motor Vehicle Theft**

Rank	COUNTY	MV Theft	Rank	COUNTY	MV Theft
1	Kings	2,081	32	Sullivan	34
2	Queens	1,933		Tompkins	34
3	Bronx	1,367	34	Ontario	33
4	Erie	1,180	35	Cayuga	31
5	Suffolk	1,162	36	St. Lawrence	30
6	Monroe	952	37	Orleans	29
7	New York	741	38	Putnam	24
8	Nassau	691	39	Livingston	22
9	Westchester	605	40	Allegany	21
10	Onondaga	511		Fulton	21
11	Niagara	319	42	Clinton	19
12	Richmond	247		Tioga	19
13	Schenectady	229	44	Herkimer	18
14	Albany	211		Montgomery	18
15	Orange	197	46	Franklin	12
16	Broome	190		Otsego	12
17	Oneida	153		Schoharie	12
	Rensselaer	153		Seneca	12
19	Rockland	118		Washington	12
20	Chautauqua	105	51	Columbia	11
21	Saratoga	99		Delaware	11
22	Dutchess	78		Greene	11
23	Oswego	69	54	Chenango	10
24	Ulster	64	55	Warren	9
25	Genesee	51	56	Essex	8
26	Jefferson	49	57	Cortland	7
27	Cattaraugus	45	58	Lewis	4
	Chemung	45		Wyoming	4
29	Steuben	42	60	Schuyler	3
30	Wayne	39	61	Yates	2
31	Madison	35	62	Hamilton	1

**2016 Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Suspected Incidents**

Rank	COUNTY	MV INSURANCE FRAUD	Rank	COUNTY	MV INSURANCE FRAUD
1	Kings	4,754	32	Genesee	12
2	Queens	3,550		Ontario	12
3	Bronx	2,411		Oswego	12
4	New York	1,898	35	Livingston	11
5	Nassau	1,298	36	Madison	10
6	Suffolk	723	37	Chenango	9
7	Westchester	560		Lewis	9
8	Erie	351		Steuben	9
9	Richmond	304	40	Chemung	8
10	Monroe	237		Delaware	8
11	Onondaga	159		Fulton	8
12	Albany	120		Orleans	8
13	Orange	116	44	Cortland	7
14	Rockland	72		Franklin	7
15	Oneida	67		Herkimer	7
16	Dutchess	51		Otsego	7
17	Schenectady	46		Tioga	7
18	Niagara	45	49	Clinton	6
19	Broome	41		Montgomery	6
20	Ulster	32		Seneca	6
21	Jefferson	26		Wayne	6
22	Sullivan	24	53	Allegany	5
23	Rensselaer	23		Columbia	5
24	Saratoga	22		Wyoming	5
25	Putnam	20	56	Warren	4
26	Essex	19		Washington	4
27	Chautauqua	17	58	Schoharie	3
28	Greene	16		Tompkins	3
	St. Lawrence	16		Yates	3
30	Cayuga	14	61	Hamilton	1
31	Cattaraugus	13	62	Schuyler	0