NEW YORK STATE

Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Board

2023 Annual Report

New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services
80 South Swan St., Albany, New York 12210

www.criminaljustice.ny.gov

New York State
Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention
2023 Annual Report

This report is submitted as required by Section 846-1(3)(h) of the New York State Executive Law by the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services on behalf of the Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Board. The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services provides staff support to the board.

Issued October 2024

Kathy Hochul
Governor
State of New York

Rossana Rosado
Commissioner
New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

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I. Introduction

Motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud have a substantial impact on insurance rates in New York State and across the country. These crimes are highly sophisticated and cost law-abiding motor vehicle owners and insurance policyholders hundreds of millions of dollars in increased business expenses and significantly higher annual insurance rates.

The New York Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Program (MVTIFP) is designed to reduce the overall cost of motor vehicle insurance in the state by targeting theft and fraud and is funded by a statutorily required fee assessed on each motor vehicle insurance policy issued in New York State. The 2023-2024 state budget appropriated $3.7 million for the program, which was used to support grants to law enforcement agencies and other entities to combat theft and fraud during the calendar year 2023, as detailed in this report.

A 12-member Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Board (board), which includes representatives of law enforcement, consumers of motor vehicle insurance, insurance carriers and relevant state agency representatives who are appointed by the Governor, 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's participating agencies.

A. Motor Vehicle Theft

Great strides have been made in reducing motor vehicle theft in New York. From 1997 through 2023, reported thefts decreased 52 percent. In 2022, however, there was a dramatic increase in vehicles reported stolen: 26,994, representing a 115 percent increase from the 12,573 reported stolen in 2019.[1] This represents the first year with a significant increase in motor vehicle theft since the inception of the program in 1994, and the increase exceeds the 11 percent increase in reported thefts nationwide, according to data from the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB). In 2023 we continued to see an increase in vehicle thefts with 38,620 reported motor vehicle thefts compared to 26,994 in 2022. This is a 43 percent increase from last year. New York is in the top 10 states with the highest number of thefts by volume (ranked #7) as well as the top 10 states with the highest theft percentage increase from 2022 to 2023 (also ranked 7th).

As almost all counties have reported, due to a TikTok posting, Hyundai and Kia vehicles dominated the top 10 vehicle makes and models stolen in 2023. This posting on social media showed in detail how to steal these vehicles bypassing the key and security system in the vehicle. Nationwide, the Hyundai Elantra had the highest number of thefts, with 48,445 vehicles reported stolen. Full-size pickups including the Chevrolet Silverado 1500 and Ford F150 were also included among the top 10 stolen makes and models in 2023.

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[1] The 2023 report includes numbers provided as of 9/11/24, and includes data submitted after 4/3/2023.

Motor Vehicle Theft Reported Incidents in New York State
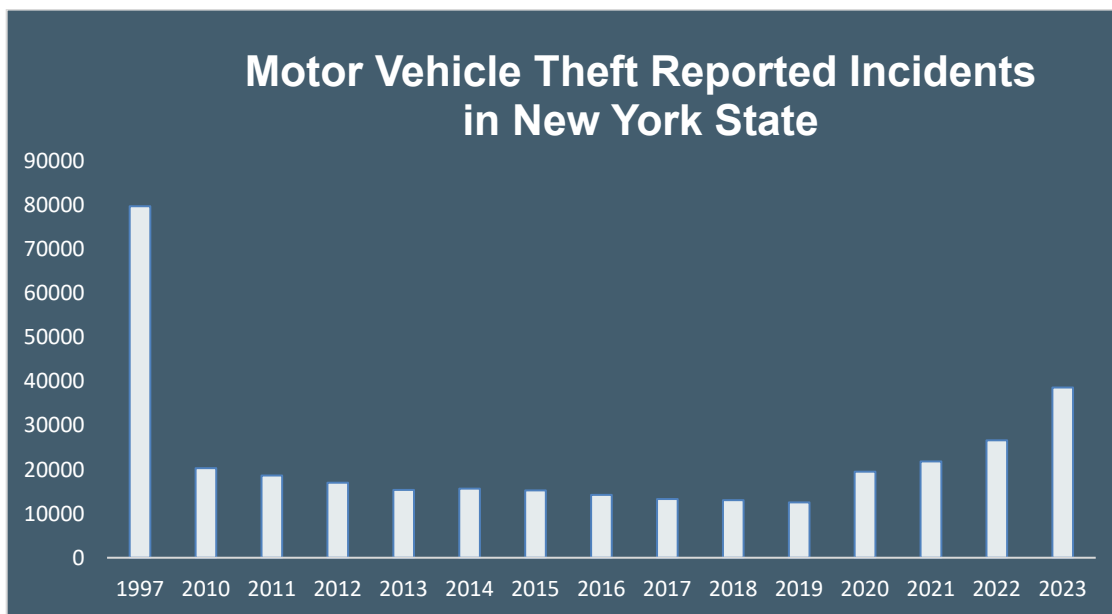
Motor Vehicle Theft 2022 vs. 2023 Top Ten Counties			
County	**2022**	**2023**	**% Change**
Monroe	2,108	6,762	+221
Erie	2,591	5,497	+112
Bronx	4,052	5,513	+36
Queens	3,725	5,153	+38
Kings	3,708	4,388	+18
Suffolk	1,471	1,531	+4
Onondaga	942	1,482	+57
New York	1,973	2,280	+16
Westchester	803	971	+21
Nassau	977	889	-9

A large number of motor vehicle thefts continue to occur in the New York City region, with the 5 NYC counties all reporting a moderate increase in 2023. The five non-New York City counties – Erie, Monroe, Westchester, Onondaga, and Suffolk, also saw increases in thefts, with the exception of Nassau County. Statewide, 28 of the 62 counties saw decreases in thefts, while 30 counties recorded increases and 4 remained the same from 2022.

B. Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud

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 vehicles.

- **Liability:** To protect against the harm their vehicles – 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 members or their passengers might suffer in a hit-and-run accident or in an accident with an uninsured vehicle.

Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Suspected Incidents in New York State

Year	All Fraud	No-Fault
2010	18,108	12,807
2011	17,121	11,974
2012	18,677	13,944
2013	17,576	13,198
2014	19,912	15,439
2015	17,514	12,891
2016	17,549	12,339
2017	17,478	12,762
2018	18,937	14,459
2019	19,794	15,146
2020	24,238	18,663
2021	26627	21,310
2022	32,963	28,145
2023	38270	33,646
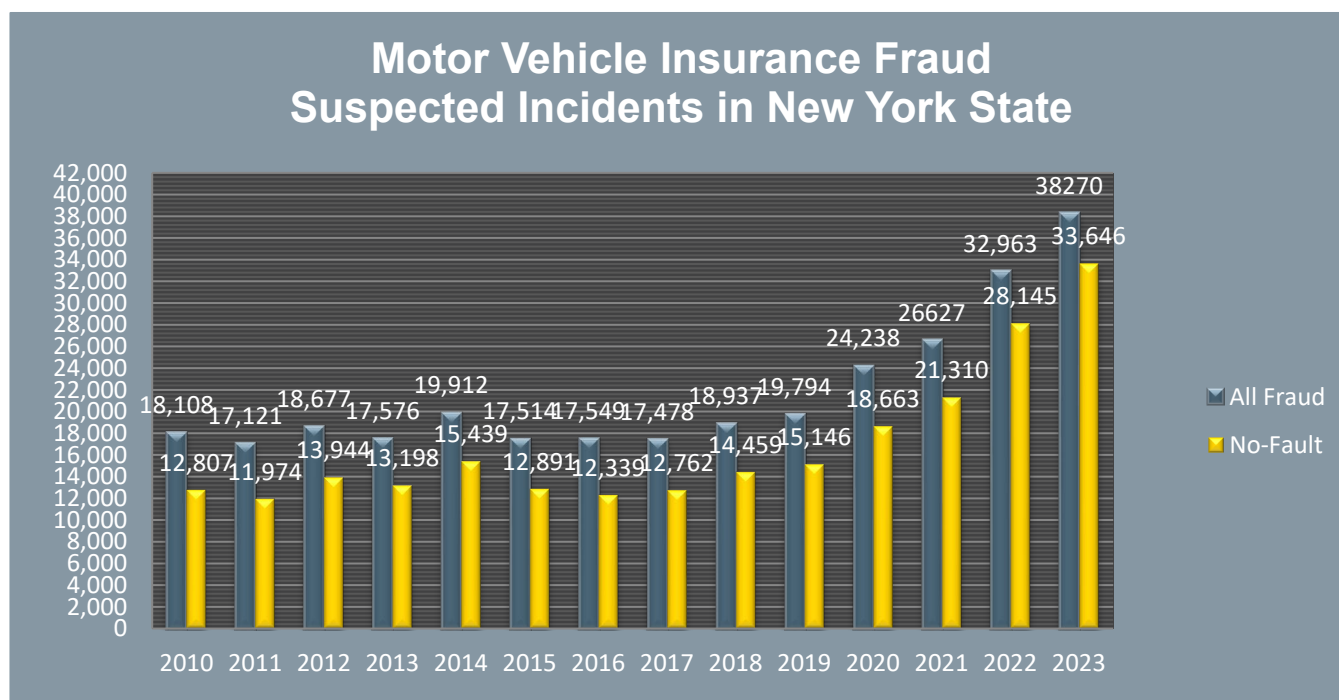
Insurance carriers reported 38,270 incidents of suspected motor vehicle insurance fraud to the New York State Department of Financial Services (DFS) Insurance Frauds Bureau in 2023, including no-fault, motor vehicle theft, motor vehicle arson, larceny from motor vehicles, motor vehicle vandalism, motor vehicle collision damage, falsified motor vehicle invoices and fraudulent motor vehicle insurance cards. This represents an all-time high in incidents of suspected motor vehicle insurance fraud and an increase of approximately 93 percent from levels reported in 2019. In 2023, no-fault rose to 33,646, a 19.5 percent increase from the previous year.

No-fault motor vehicle insurance fraud typically accounts for more than half of all reports of insurance fraud and three-quarters of reports of motor vehicle insurance fraud. In 2023, no-fault fraud is now approximately 88 percent of all suspected incidents of motor vehicle insurance fraud reported. No-fault insurance fraud reports went up from 28,145 in 2022 to 33,646 in 2023.

II. Program Goals

The goal of the MVTIFP 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 consistent with 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 periodically 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 are available on the DCJS website under Annual Reports and Publications and provide guidance on the types of projects supported by program funding.

III. Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Board

The MVTIFP is supposed to be administered by a 12-member board with the DCJS commissioner or designee serving as its chair. All board members are appointed by the governor: three are recommended by the speaker of the New York State Assembly, three by the temporary president of the New York State Senate, and the remaining five by the governor. Members serve four-year terms and are not considered public officials. The board includes representatives of consumers of motor vehicle insurance, motor vehicle insurance companies, law enforcement agencies and the judicial system. However, the board did not have an adequate number of members for a legal quorum, preventing program or grant changes.

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:

- Assessments of the magnitude and scope of the problems, including an analysis of theft and fraud by region.
- Methods for combating the problems.
- Information relevant to the development of competitive request for proposals (RFPs) 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:

- Execute contracts.
- Accept grants and other contributions.
- Make grants through an RFP process.
- Appoint employees and affix compensation.
- Request assistance and information from the New York State Police, police departments throughout the state, DFS, state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), state Office of Court Administration, any New York state agency or from any insurer.
- Assist municipalities in the development of local programs.
- 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)
- 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

A lack of quorum due to several unfilled vacancies prevented the board from meeting.

B. Programs Funded by The Board for Calendar Year 2023

In 2020, renewal grants were issued in the following award amounts for calendar year 2023:

New York City Region	Award
Bronx County District Attorney	$329,991
Kings County District Attorney	$250,873
New York County District Attorney	$263,445
Queens County District Attorney	$560,625
Richmond County District Attorney	$50,144
NYPD Auto Crime Division	$199,000
NYPD Fraudulent Collision Investigation Squad	$100,000
NYPD Auto Larceny Fraud Investigation Unit	$ 24,873
Fire Department of New York City (FDNY)	$124,800
New York City Suburban Region	**Award**
Nassau County District Attorney	$114,300
Nassau County Police Department	$145,869
Suffolk County District Attorney	$283,210
Suffolk County Police Department	$123,556
Westchester County District Attorney	$277,963
Yonkers City Police Department	$122,414
Capital Region/Hudson Valley	**Award**
Albany City Police Department	$33,000
Albany County District Attorney	$65,050
Western Region	**Award**
Buffalo City Police Department	$106,884
Cheektowaga Town Police Department	$36,542
Erie County District Attorney	$104,758
Niagara County District Attorney	$109,443
Niagara County Sheriff Department	$20,000
Niagara Falls City Police Department	$23,400
Finger Lakes Region	**Award**
Monroe County District Attorney	$87,000
Monroe County Sheriff Office	$36,500
Rochester City Police Department	$49,520
Statewide	**Award**
New York Anti-Car Theft and Fraud Association, Inc.	$65,100
New York Prosecutors Training Institute, Inc.	$40,740

IV. 2023 Grant Program Descriptions

New York City Region

Bronx County District Attorney's Office

The Bronx District Attorney's Office Anti-Auto Theft Unit received a grant of $329,991 for 2023 which partially funded salaries of three Assistant District Attorneys, and three Investigators. The Anti-Auto Theft program aims 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 vehicles, and insurance fraud.

The Bronx District Attorney's Office, by employing a multitude of both established and advanced techniques, Detective Investigators and Assistant District Attorneys collaborate to detect, investigate, prosecute, and punish offenders of motor vehicle theft, insurance fraud and related offenses. Prosecutors effected 70 indictments during the year. After a September meeting with senior members of the NYPD in the Bronx, our office worked to increase communications with the NYPD to identify top GLA recidivists. The NYPD created a new unit focusing on auto crime (in addition to its own Auto Crime Division) and is seeking to use its Detectives Squad to enhance cases. They have begun to see the improvement in communication in exchanges between the NYPD and the DA's Crime Strategies Bureau. They continue to see the connection of cars with fake temporary plates to violent crimes. They are also seeing cases involving thefts of cars, altering of their VINS and subsequent sales to unsuspecting buyers over social media market sites such as Facebook. The Detective Investigators assigned under the grant testified in 18 grand jury presentations. In 2023, 264 stolen vehicles were recovered with a value of $7,015,985. The D.I.s conducted 8 bait car operations in the Bronx and opened a case after a referral from NICB regarding unauthorized tow of a 2021 Nissan Rogue. This vehicle belonged to a car rental company and pursuant to the investigation, the owner of the tow company was arrested for grand larceny.

The office utilizes a vertical prosecution model for vehicle theft and fraud cases. Prosecutors are involved in cases from the earliest stages, working with detectives to review, draft and present search warrant applications and seek cooperation from defendants after arrest.

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 2023, investigators and prosecutors conferred with the following partner agencies: NICB, 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, DFS, other prosecutors' offices, both inside and outside of New York State DMV, and special investigations units of major motor vehicle insurance carriers.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	45	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	70
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	45	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	335
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	1,418	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF Cases	$0

Kings County District Attorney's Office

The Kings County District Attorney's Office did not participate in the MVTIF program or receive any of the $250,873 allotted to it from the grant for 2023 due to staffing and records management problems.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	0	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	0
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	0	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	2
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	0	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF Cases	$0

New York County District Attorney's Office

The New York County (Manhattan) District Attorney's Office received a $263,445 grant in 2023 funding three part-time assistant district attorneys, an Investigator, and a 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, fraudulent insurance broker schemes, and combat the production, possession, and use of counterfeit auto insurance and other motor vehicle related documents. Significantly, over the last five years, the program has helped fund a major investigation into the tow truck industry.

Throughout 2023, grant-funded attorneys continued to investigate the tow truck industry and build criminal cases against numerous defendants, as they have in prior years, with a new focus on auto body shops that work in concert with towing companies to artificially inflate insurance claims. The investigation is ongoing but we continue to identify groups of individuals that are 1) creating geographic-based monopolies, 2) falsifying business records with government agencies to illegally acquire tow licenses, 3) engaging in coercion and violence to maintain their dominance over their geographical area, 4) participating in insurance fraud schemes by towing vehicles to one or more body shops owned/ controlled by owners of the tow truck company and 5) engaging in money laundering to secret their illicit proceeds.

In addition to the tow truck investigation, the Rackets Bureau continues to investigate other motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud-related offenses such as staged-accident rings, injuries as a result of being struck by vehicles, and individuals claiming to have been injured as a result of a motor vehicle accident, but evidence suggests that either the collision never occurred, or the individuals were not present at the time of the collision. Investigations are ongoing and continue to provide invaluable evidence.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	13	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	101
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	2	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	162
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	922	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF Cases	$0

Queens County District Attorney's Office

The Queens County District Attorney's Office received a $560,625 grant in 2023 paying for three full-time assistant district attorneys, one supervisor, two part-time assistant district attorneys, and one full-time investigator assigned to the Specialized Auto Crime and Insurance Fraud Unit. This unit is comprised of attorneys, investigators, and paralegals with special expertise in auto theft and insurance fraud. The unit focuses on long-term investigations and the handling of specially selected cases for trial and targets organized auto theft and insurance fraud activity. A major emphasis is placed on building enterprise corruption cases to ensure that the foundations of criminal activity are uprooted and to aggressively pursue individual prosecution and obtain maximum sentencing.

The Queens County District Attorney's Office has a comprehensive approach to auto crimes and insurance fraud by continuing their efforts of strong partnership and coordination with local, state, federal law enforcement, and insurance agencies. These long-term investigations use confidential informants, electronic surveillance, human surveillance, and sting operations. One of these long-term investigations is investigating 16 accidents that all involved non-citizens who are all from the same country, all purchased their vehicle shortly before their accident, all accidents involved a box truck type vehicle, all had the same insurance broker and each accident occurred within 45 days of the issuance of insurance policy, each of the 16 vehicles had a driver and two passengers, and all involved received medical treatment at two specific clinics and were all represented by the same two law firms.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	45	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	143
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	28	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	587
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	1,126	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF Cases	$16,389

Richmond County District Attorney's Office

The Richmond County (Staten Island) District Attorney's Office received a $50,144 grant in 2023 partially supporting three assistant district attorneys. The Trials Bureau investigates and prosecutes all program felony cases, and the Criminal Court Bureau prosecutes cases with felony charges that have the potential to be pleaded down to a misdemeanor.

The primary goal of the MVTIFP is to provide an integrated means to prevent and reduce incidences of motor vehicle theft and motor vehicle insurance fraud in Richmond County. The district attorney's approach to case reviews includes 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.

Attorneys continued to note the trend of vehicles stolen while left running unattended or with keys left inside, and the Kia Challenge. In response, the district attorney's office and the NYPD utilized social media to remind the community of the importance of locking vehicles and not leaving them running unattended.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	**Total**	**Performance Measure**	**Total**
Investigations Initiated – Theft	174	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	155
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	0	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	950
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	1,733	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF Cases	$0

New York City Police Department Auto Crime Division

Part of the Criminal Enterprise Division of the Detective Bureau of the NYPD, the Auto Crime Division's 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. The Auto Crime Division received a grant of $199,000 in 2023 to fund police overtime, vehicle forensics training, equipment and rental vehicles for surveillance and investigations.

The Auto Crime Division utilizes several strategies in combatting motor vehicle related crime. The unit utilizes an in-house team of analysts to monitor trends and data related to auto theft and insurance fraud crimes and to disseminate such information throughout the NYPD and other neighboring jurisdictions to help determine locations for targeted enforcement.

Through investigations into the sale of stolen vehicles and parts on social media and the internet, the Auto Crime Division has gained investigative leads into organized theft rings and has recovered numerous stolen vehicles and parts through buy-bust operations. The use of undercover officers and informants enhances these investigations. The division also maintains extensive interstate and federal law enforcement contacts, which enable investigators to develop information on individuals outside of New York who use the internet for criminal activity.

The use of modern technology – including social media, wiretaps, GPS tracking devices, license plate readers, cameras, and smart phone technology – plays an important role in auto crime investigations. Smart phones allow investigators to obtain immediate information in the field, including important records from DMV, the NICB, E-Justice and vehicle salvage records. In addition, advanced computers are used to view and enhance photos and videos to assist in the identification of stolen vehicles or vehicles used in crimes. In 2020, the Auto Crime School conducted a training class on the use of Berla vehicle forensics technology, providing training and vehicle forensics kits to auto crime investigators and ensuring citywide availability of this technology.

In 2021, New York City established the first in the nation catalytic converter labeling program. This program gives Law Enforcement the ability to identify stolen catalytic converters and enhance prosecution. The theft of catalytic converters in New York City has increased more than 300 percent over 2020. 2022 continued the Catalytic Converter labeling program in NYC. This program gives Law Enforcement the ability to identify stolen Catalytic Converters and enhance prosecution. The theft of Catalytic Converters has significantly decreased in NYC because of our initiatives.

In addition to its investigative work, the Auto Crime Division also maintains one of only two college accredited courses on auto crime and insurance fraud in the country. This four-day course is conducted twice a month, and 402 attendees were trained in the fundamentals of auto theft and insurance fraud. These trainings were sponsored by National Insurance Crime Bureau, New York Anti Car Theft & Fraud Association, New York State Department of Motor Vehicle and The International Association of Auto Theft Investigators.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	509	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	2
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	15,795	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	10,041	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	0	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	11,618

New York Police Department Fraudulent Collision Investigation Squad

The NYPD Fraudulent Collision Investigation Squad (FCIS) received a $100,000 grant in 2023. The grant paid for overtime for uniformed members and investigators, training and rental vehicles for surveillance, search warrants and arrests. The FCIS works with the Health Care Fraud Task Force to combat no-fault insurance fraud at the state and federal levels, conducting both short- and long-term investigations.

Since 2007, FCIS has redeveloped itself into two specific units, the Fraudulent Collision Investigation Squad and the Health Care Fraud Task Force, combating No-Fault insurance fraud at the state and federal levels. The FCIS and HCFTF are recognized and acknowledged in law enforcement and the insurance industry for having developed detailed strategies and having conducted both short- and long-term No-Fault Fraud investigations. The squad utilized a portion of grant funding to attend training conducted by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners. The training covered the entire fraud investigation process, including identifying fraud schemes, conducting interviews, preparing documentation, resolving fraud allegations, and fundamental legal concepts involved in a fraud examination.

FCIS focus their investigations on how these individuals are receiving treatment. Many medical facilities are involved with providing treatment without correct paperwork or without ever examining their patients. The successful reduction of insurance fraud is achieved by FCIS because of new training and more experience from networking. During 2023, the FCIS purchased equipment that assisted us in daily surveillance investigations. In 2023, FCIS continued to investigate the long-term case labeled "Operation Squeeze". This case involves a money grab with the use of tow trucks that damage and destroy vehicles for the registered owners. FCIS members received information from a confidential source that stated insurance claims were being made on vehicles that were not involved in motor vehicle accidents. The source stated that these vehicles were picked up by tow companies.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	**Total**	**Performance Measure**	**Total**
Investigations Initiated – Theft	NA*	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	NA	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	13
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	NA	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	13
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	NA	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	33

*The FCIS responds solely to insurance fraud cases and does not track theft-related statistics.

New York Police Department Auto Larceny Fraud Investigation Unit

The NYPD Auto Larceny Fraud Investigation Unit is a specialized unit formed to combat auto theft fraud in Patrol Borough Queens South. The unit consists of six full-time employees, four investigators and two supervisors. The sole function of the unit is to investigate reported vehicle thefts that have indications of fraud. In 2022 the unit received a grant of $24,873, which was used primarily to support overtime for the unit's investigation of fraudulent theft reports.

Investigators review all auto theft reports for indicators of fraud. When a case is selected for further investigation, the relevant parties from the insurance industry are contacted, and insurance investigators and Auto Larceny Fraud Investigation Unit members coordinate efforts to reveal any inconsistencies in the details of the report. The unit's collaborative program strategy to combat automobile fraud also includes routine communication with the Queens County District Attorney's Office for case development and to ensure that maximum charges are brought against perpetrators of insurance fraud. Additionally, unit members often provide assistance and guidance to patrol officers to improve efforts to detect and prevent auto theft fraud.

Due to manpower shortage within the NYPD, this unit was disbanded and was inactive for the grant period.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	**Total**	**Performance Measure**	**Total**
Investigations Initiated – Theft	0	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	0
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	0	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	0	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	0	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	0

Fire Department of New York City

The FDNY received a $124,800 grant in 2023 to fund fire marshals assigned to the Auto Fraud Squad. The Auto Fraud Squad continues to screen all motor vehicle fires throughout the five boroughs of New York City to identify priority incidents and incidents of fraud. The focus of these investigations is forensic examination of the fire scene, evidence recognition and collection and thorough examination of vehicle

owners' documents. The Auto Fraud Squad's strategy is to employ all investigative techniques available in a coordinated effort to identify fraud.

The Auto Fraud Squad continued its focus on citywide vehicle fire activity, specifically focusing on incidents involving staged theft, arson, insurance fraud, conspiracy, and associated crimes. The Squad identified, investigated, and brought to prosecution numerous incidents of arson and insurance fraud, resulting in convictions and/or denied or withdrawn insurance claims.

Members of the Auto Fraud Squad screened over 1,900 car fires in New York City in 2022, utilizing 1,444 hours of overtime. After screening, cases are selected for investigations that may lead to denial of fraudulent insurance claims, arrest of those making the claims, and apprehension of those hired to torch the vehicles. The Auto Fraud Squad maintained a strong collaborative relationship with the NYPD Auto Larceny Fraud Investigation Unit, the Queens District Attorney's Office and DFS, leading to successful investigation and prosecution of serial larceny and arson cases. Grant funding allows the assigned fire marshals additional work time to enhance investigations by canvassing for video and witnesses, screening relevant data from License Plate Readers, viewing various city-controlled security cameras and reviewing E-ZPass® records.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated	1,778	Responses to Motor Vehicle Fires where Fraud Is Suspected	26
Total Arrests	15	Number of Fire Insurance Claims Cancelled Due to Initiation of Law Enforcement Investigation	14
Responses to Motor Vehicle Fires	375	Total Value of Claims Denied/Withdrawn	$301,610

New York City Suburban Region

Nassau County District Attorney's Office

The Nassau County District Attorney's Office received a $114,300 grant in 2023 partially funding one assistant district attorney, one bilingual investigator and a legal secretary 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 NICB, and other law enforcement and insurance agencies to detect and reduce the incidence of these crimes.

The Nassau County District Attorney's Office ("NCDAO") has 200 attorneys with a total staff of over 423 employed in various roles for the 5th largest prosecutor's office in New York State. In 2022, District Attorney Anne T. Donnelly created the Revenue, Auto, Insurance, and Labor Crime Bureau ("RAIL"). One of RAIL's mandates is to concentrate on and address the problems of motor vehicle related insurance fraud, auto theft and related crimes. DA Donnelly staffed RAIL with prosecutors who each have decades of experience. These ADAs collaborate with agencies such as the Nassau County Police Department ("NCPD"), the National Insurance Crime Bureau ("NICB"), the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles ("DMV"), and New York State Police ("NYSP") to investigate and prosecute motor vehicle related crimes.

The unit investigates and prosecutes cases relating to motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud. Staff work with and act as liaisons to other prosecutors' offices, law enforcement, private entities and the public. The office's Just Ware 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 record dispositions. The unit works closely with the district attorney's technical investigators on technical aspects of investigations, including monitoring and maintaining surveillance equipment and conducting forensic analysis of electronic devices.

The office coordinated with the police department's Major Case Bureau Vehicle Theft Section on the re-arrest and prosecution of numerous defendants who re-offended and faced significantly longer sentences after previously being charged with grand larcenies for theft of unlocked vehicles with the keys left inside overnight.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	5	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	15
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	5	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	176
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	285	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF Cases	$12,502

Nassau County Police Department

The Nassau County Police Department (NCPD) received a $145,869 grant in 2023 to pay for 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 Nassau County.

The police department, in collaboration with the district attorney, created strategies to prevent and reduce the incidence of motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud within Nassau County. Strategies cover street level enforcement, investigations, and prosecution. The police department strategy involves detectives, police officers, intelligence analysts and supervisors throughout the county and incorporates intelligence-based policing for targeted and comprehensive enforcement and investigations.

The NCPD created strategies tailored to prevent, deter, and reduce the incidence of motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud within Nassau County. These strategies correspond with the MVTIFP NYS Statewide Plans of Operation, recognizing that a key to success is inter- and intra-agency coordination and collaboration. The strategy is crafted as a continuum of services, ranging from street level enforcement to investigations to prosecution. The NCPD strategy, spearheaded by the Burglary Pattern Team, Auto Crime Squad (ACS), involves detectives, police officers, intel analysts, and supervisors incorporating intelligence-based policing to perform targeted and comprehensive MVTIF enforcement and investigations. As auto crime was at an all-time high in 2021 and 2022, the NCPD employed a variety of techniques to target MVTIF related crime, utilizing approximately 1,400 hours of grant funded overtime, and many, many more hours during officer and detectives' regular duty. NCPD intelligence analysts-maintained data, mapped locations of MVTIF crimes, and created intelligence bulletins used by NCPD personnel to conduct both overt and covert enforcement and investigations, resulting in vehicle recoveries and arrests. NCPD personnel reviewed theft data, examined stolen vehicle reports and field interviews for

theft and fraud indicators, conducted database searches for recovery information including parking tickets, plate readers, International Organization for Standardization (ISO), CARFAX, and New York State Police Information Resource Management (NYSPIN); indexed stolen vehicles with NICB; and much more. Nassau County continues to identify and investigate crime patterns, including residential thefts, thefts of catalytic converters, thefts of vehicles for use in the commission of other crimes, and tire and rim thefts. ACS detectives are regularly called to utilize their expertise in conducting vehicle examinations in order to identify VIN numbers and other information, particularly in cases of fire and suspected arson. Nassau County continues to experience the theft of high-end vehicles from driveways of private residences along the north and south shore of Long Island. These thefts are monitored by the ACS for fraud indicators and recovery locations. The ACS has been working with multi-jurisdictional agencies: New Jersey State Police Task Force, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Suffolk Police Department Auto Crime Unit, NYPD Auto Crime Unit, New York State Police, NICB and the Waterfront Commission of New York & New Jersey, as a majority of the high-end vehicles continue to be recovered in Newark, N.J., or on shipping containers on Staten Island, in Virginia and Massachusetts. There are several on-going investigations related to this pattern. The ACS also reports detecting a pattern of the larcenies of tires and rims in the confines of Nassau County. Investigating detectives have recorded, analyzed, and are investigating multiple grand larcenies occurring from residential streets, driveways and dealerships. A coordinated effort has been established between investigating detectives, NCPD crime scene detectives, and crime analysts from the NCPD Asset/Intel Unit and forensic examiners from the Nassau County Medical Examiner's Office for continuing investigations. For instance, ACS detectives assisted in an investigation at an Auto Expo dealership in Great Neck, where two subjects were seen on video entering the building and removing numerous key fobs for vehicles parked on the lot. It was determined that 10 vehicles had been stolen. ACS detectives recovered nine of the ten by using GPS tracking and by canvassing the area where the vehicles had been left. All were recovered in New York City, and they were processed for fingerprints and DNA. The vehicles have been returned, and the investigation continues. Additionally, the Burglary Squad - Auto Crime Section has discovered a pattern of larcenies of catalytic converters. Investigating detectives and police officers, especially those from the Department's Bureau of Special Operations, spent hours patrolling the county investigating vehicle break-ins and catalytic converter thefts. Targeting several different residential and commercial areas within Nassau County resulted in a reduction of these crimes.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	97	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	4
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	820	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	41	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	1
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	0	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	578

Suffolk County District Attorney's Office

The Suffolk County District Attorney's Office has a Financial Investigations & Money Laundering Bureau that targets white collar crimes, including insurance fraud and motor vehicle theft. The district attorney received a $283,210 grant in 2023 to fund five positions: three assistant district attorneys, a detective investigator, and a paralegal.

The creation and maintenance of the bureau has allowed investigators and prosecutors to strengthen resources and knowledge, while increasing coordination, experience, and expertise to combat vehicle-related crimes. The bureau prosecutes all cases related to insurance fraud and motor vehicle theft, as well as all motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases generated by unit investigators, the Suffolk County Police Department, the New York State Police, and village police departments on the East End. The Bureau also handles referrals from DMV, DFS, the NICB and the Special Investigative Units of insurance carriers.

The Financial Crimes Bureau ("FCB") of the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office ("SCDAO") utilizes different tactics to effectively target motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud offenders. FCB's objective is to allow investigators and prosecutors to strengthen resources and knowledge while achieving an increased level of coordination and expertise in combatting vehicle-related crimes. FCB prosecutes all cases generated by FCB investigators and the Suffolk County Police Department's District Attorney Squad ("SCPD DA's Squad") related to insurance fraud and motor vehicle theft. FCB also handles referrals from NYS DFS, NYS DMV, NICB, and the insurance industry SIUs. FCB maximizes interagency cooperation through the permanent placement of investigators from NYS DFS, NICB, SCPD DA Squad detectives, and the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office ("SCSO") Deputy Sheriffs. These assignments augment the already dedicated FCB staff of investigators and ADAs.

FCB started a long-term investigation into the theft and sale of tires and rims in Suffolk County by two individuals that will continue into 2024. This investigation has required many electronic storage search warrants as well as historic cell site orders and is expected to yield the resolution of over one hundred tire and rim thefts within Suffolk County.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	**Total**	**Performance Measure**	**Total**
Investigations Initiated – Theft	3	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	8
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	1	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	26
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	40	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF Cases	$0

Suffolk County Police Department

The Suffolk County Police Department received a $123,556 grant in 2023 to pay for overtime and training and employs an intelligence-based and data-driven approach to investigating motor vehicle and insurance fraud crime. The police department utilizes the Property/Auto Crime Unit to maintain a centralized approach and a dedicated command focused on motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud. This is for a 565-square-mile area with a population of 1.5 million.

2023 funding provided 1,387.5 overtime hours allowing enhanced investigations and initiation of 338 Vehicle Theft and 2 Insurance Fraud investigations under the program and an additional 2 for the department (4 total). We also observed a decrease of 22 percent in catalytic converter thefts, 1,232 were reported in 2023 compared to 1,778 reported in 2022.

There were 1,531 vehicles reported stolen in Suffolk County, 60 more than in 2022. In 2023, the vehicle recovery rate shows a 12 percent decrease from 2022, in which 987 vehicles were recovered. It is important to remember that recovered vehicles may not correlate to those reported stolen.

2023 saw a continuing trend of vehicle thefts from vehicles being left running, keys left in the vehicles and the famous Kia Challenge from TikTok detailing how to easily steal Kia Vehicles.

No grant funded theft and fraud data was received for 2023.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	338	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	2
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	1,203	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	987	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	0	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	0

Westchester County District Attorney's Office

The Westchester County District Attorney's Office received a $277,963 grant in 2023 to fund an Auto Crimes Unit (ACU) with a senior assistant prosecutor and two police investigators. A crime analyst assigned to the unit works with a similar squad at the Yonkers Police Department. In addition to pursuing its own investigations, the unit provides daily assistance to the 42 police departments within the county and conducts extensive investigations with the local agencies.

The predominant trends in auto thefts in Westchester County in 2023 are the following: (1) Thefts of vehicles from dealerships; (2) thefts of unlocked vehicles with ignition keys/fobs left in the vehicle; (3) thefts of unattended running vehicles; (4) theft of vehicle parts including catalytic converters; (5) fraudulent inspection stickers and out-of-state license plates; (6) vehicles being stolen, their VIN altered and then the vehicle is sold on Facebook Marketplace.

The use of LPR, pursuit mitigation technology and instant inter-agency communication had a great effect this year in speeding up response times to vehicles that are identified as being stolen. This has allowed local law enforcement to recover more stolen vehicles and arrest more perpetrators of motor vehicle crimes.

It has become clear that auto crimes are closely connected to other crimes, including violent- and gang-related crimes. Therefore, the prosecution of auto crimes perpetrated by organized groups has provided very good intelligence that has allowed the ACU to assist other agencies with violent crime investigations, but there are fewer defendants to indict/prosecute due to the burden placed on prosecutors by Discovery Reform and subsequent court rulings regarding the interpretations of those reforms.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	**Total**	**Performance Measure**	**Total**
Investigations Initiated – Theft	47	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	29
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	1	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	79
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	183	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF Cases	$0

Yonkers City Police Department

The Yonkers Police Department received a $122,414 grant in 2023 to pay for a full-time detective and overtime for complex investigations, as well as officer training expenses. The department investigates reports of stolen vehicles, cars with stolen parts, altered VINs, bogus registration and inspection stickers, and out-of-state dealer plates or other suspicious tags. The department works closely with other agencies, such as the NYPD, New York State Police, and other local jurisdictions to combat auto crimes across the City of Yonkers.

The Yonkers Police Department continued its commitment to hosting a designated specialized auto crimes unit within the Detective Division, funding a full-time detective to combat motor vehicle theft and pursue fraud investigations. The unit works closely with the NYPD, the New York State Police, the Westchester County District Attorney's office, DMV and NICB to investigate auto crime.

The auto crimes unit continued the department's technology-driven approach to investigating motor vehicle crimes. The assigned detective installs temporary surveillance cameras and license plate readers in critical motor vehicle crime locations, allowing these areas to be monitored during late night and early morning hours. The detective also installed a license plate reader on an unmarked patrol vehicle. These strategies have proven successful.

The Auto Crimes Unit has been instrumental in progressing the Yonkers Police Department's technology-driven approach to investigating motor vehicle crimes. Temporary installations of several surveillance cameras at critical motor vehicle crime locations have enabled monitoring of activity at these locations, even during late night and early morning hours to obtain information, including license plate numbers, when suspicious activity has occurred. This has led to the successful apprehension of multiple offenders. Additionally, one of the detectives had a license plate reader installed on an unmarked vehicle that he uses when conducting patrols. This has also proved to be valuable to the success of these investigations.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	**Total**	**Performance Measure**	**Total**
Investigations Initiated – Theft	278	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	1
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	417	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	355	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	0	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	17

Capital Region/Hudson Valley

Albany City Police Department

The Albany Police Department received a $33,000 grant in 2023 to pay for police overtime and training for officers assigned to its Auto Crimes Task Force. This task force consists of 36 members, including patrol officers, detectives, sergeants, and lieutenants. It operates within the department's Criminal Investigation Division, supervised by a detective lieutenant and a detective sergeant. The primary objective is to investigate all auto-related thefts and auto-related insurance fraud. The grant funding allows members of the task force to work outside normal shifts to thoroughly investigate vehicle crimes through surveillance, follow-up interviews and coordination with outside agencies. In 2021, the task force partnered with agencies including New York State Police, Albany County Sheriff's Office, the Colonie Police Department, and DMV to investigate vehicle crime.

The Albany Police Department worked to solidify and expand its core group of officers and detectives who comprise the task force, further developing the skills and specializations of current members. The task force has utilized several approaches in deterring auto-related theft. Using information gathered by the Capital Region Crime Analysis Center, the task force works in concert with the Traffic Safety Unit, as well as the Neighborhood Engagement Unit, to stay up to date with current trends and to investigate crimes and crime sprees that may extend beyond normal day-to-day duties of task force members.

With the assistance of the ACCAC and NYSP SIU, APD was able to arrest two individuals who were well known for thefts of numerous catalytic converters, as well as vehicles, most notable were Honda and Hyundai SUVs.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity				
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	115	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	0
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	414	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	347	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	0	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	67

Albany County District Attorney's Office

The Albany County District Attorney's Office received a $65,050 grant from DCJS in 2023 to fund 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 coordinated with law enforcement agencies on education, training, detection, investigation and prosecution of motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases.

The Albany County District Attorney's Office did not provide any narratives or data for this report.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	**Total**	**Performance Measure**	**Total**
Investigations Initiated – Theft	0	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	0
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	0	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	0
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	0	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF Cases	$0

Finger Lakes Region

Monroe County District Attorney's Office

The Monroe County District Attorney's Office received $87,000 in 2023 to fund an assistant district attorney and travel expenses. The assistant district attorney evaluates cases and prosecutes both felony and misdemeanor offenses; works closely with law enforcement; and is aided by investigators who interview witnesses, serve subpoenas, gather, and organize evidence, and work with law enforcement to help solve crimes and build cases for prosecution.

The district attorney participates in the Monroe County Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Task Force, which includes the Rochester Police Department, the Monroe County Sheriff's Office, the New York State Police, the Brighton Police Department, DMV, DFS, and other local police departments. The task force meets monthly to share information about pending investigations, to review referrals provided by DFS and to assign cases for investigation.

The major trend is the theft of vehicles stolen with the keys/fob still in the vehicle, burglaries where keys are stolen, then the vehicle with the stolen keys, armed carjacking, and rented vehicles not being returned on the agreed upon date.

Many of these vehicles have been stolen by repeat offenders who have been found to have stolen multiple vehicles before being caught. 74 out of 81 cases had to be transferred to family court due to the age of the defendants. Eleven juveniles were arrested for multiple offenses. 92 individuals were arrested more than once for MVTIF offenses in 2023. One individual was arrested for multiple accounts of posing as someone looking to buy a car and they are taking off when he was on a test drive then selling the vehicles for scrap.

The notable Kia Challenge on social media illustrating how to easily steal Kias and Hyundais has motivated many JV's to steal these cars and take them out on joy rides.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	**Total**	**Performance Measure**	**Total**
Investigations Initiated – Theft	41	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	88
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	2	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	252
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	747	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF Cases	$0

Monroe County Sheriff's Office

The Monroe County Sheriff's Office received a $36,500 grant in 2023 to pay for training and overtime to investigate theft and fraud cases. The sheriff's office participates in the Monroe County Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Task Force, assigning a sergeant and three investigators who collaborate with other members of the law enforcement community in Monroe County, including the district attorney, the Rochester Police Department, New York State Police, DFS, and DMV, to reduce motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud within the county.

The sheriff's office utilizes grant funds to conduct investigations into motor vehicle theft, auto stripping and insurance fraud. In 2023, the sheriff's office responded to 330 reported motor vehicle thefts, a 13 percent increase from the previous year, and recovered 311 stolen vehicles, a 99 percent increase from last year. Members of the county task force investigated 12 cases of possible motor vehicle insurance fraud, resulting in 10 arrests. Additionally, task force members investigated 3 cases of auto stripping, resulting in 1 arrest. These investigative efforts also resulted in the denial of 8 separate insurance claims.

The sheriff's office continues to identify and track emerging crime patterns, including motor vehicle thefts and auto stripping cases. These patterns are communicated during monthly meetings of the Monroe County MVTIF Task Force to further identify patterns that may be occurring in other jurisdictions. In addition, the sheriff's office works with the Monroe Crime Analysis Center to better map and track emerging crime patterns.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	13	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	16
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	330	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	311	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	8
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	0	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	165

Rochester City Police Department

The Rochester Police Department received a $49,520 grant in 2023 to pay for overtime for investigations and training on 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.

The department's auto theft grant manager coordinates investigations involving motor vehicle crime, utilizing personnel from various divisions within the department. As a result, theft investigations are not directly linked to grant funding. The investigator is assigned to the multi-agency Monroe County MVTIF Task Force, which also consists of investigators from the district attorney's office, DMV Field Investigations Division and DFS' Criminal Investigations Unit, as well as representatives of other local law enforcement agencies.

This past year actively targeted known NVTIF offenders. The results of this focus were the arrest of known car/catalytic convert thieves. Since these arrests we have seen a dramatic decrease in stolen vehicles and of catalytic converters, but with the Kia Challenge on social media illustrating how to easily steal Kia's and Hyundai's has motivated many Juveniles to steal these cars and take them out on joy rides

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	39	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	22
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	3119	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	3
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	1,900	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	15
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	6	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	206

Western New York Region

Buffalo City Police Department

The Buffalo Police Department received a $106,884 grant in 2023 to pay for detective overtime and travel and training costs to enhance the program's effectiveness. Due to organizational restructuring in 2018, motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud investigations are now handled by detectives in the department's five patrol districts and overseen by the investigative services captain. In addition, the Neighborhood Engagement Team has begun community education on auto theft prevention to strengthen the department's proactive approach to vehicle crime.

In 2023, the Buffalo Police Department partnered up with Erie County Sheriff's Department and the NYS Police helicopter unit. Due to the BPD no chase policy, this partnership has been extremely effective in following stolen vehicles to where they parked and then ground units went in to make arrests. This also acted as a deterrent due to high media coverage of arrests and the tactics used.

The department continued its major educational outreach effort regarding the dangers of leaving vehicles running unattended. In the winter months, the Neighborhood Engagement Team was mobilized to distribute over 3,000 flyers and posters throughout the city, especially in areas with high incidence of car theft. Television and print news also covered the effort.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	2,700	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	61
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	3,593	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	3,870	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	7
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	46	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	1,057

Cheektowaga Town Police Department

The Cheektowaga Police Department received a $36,542 grant in 2023 for police overtime and training. Eleven of the agency's 19 detectives handle motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases.

The police department has one detective assigned to lead the Auto Theft Squad. This detective coordinates motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud investigations 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 in Cheektowaga.

The Cheektowaga Police Department has continued to focus its grant activities on investigations into motor vehicle thefts and larcenies of property/auto parts from motor vehicles and fraudulent activities, including insurance fraud, forged vehicle identification numbers and forged titles. Grant funds were utilized to provide 489 hours of overtime for detectives' investigations and to combat motor vehicle related crime.

The police department has a strong commitment to working with other agencies. Inter-agency 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. In 2023, examples of such inter-agency collaboration included: fraud investigations with several different insurance carriers; multiple checks of confidential VIN numbers with assistance from NICB, and a coordinated investigation with the Buffalo Police Department.

In investigating auto thefts, crime scene detectives photograph and process every recovered stolen motor vehicle, submitting any evidence collected to the Erie County Central Police Services Laboratory for further processing. In 2023, 25 vehicles were processed. Several of the vehicles processed were involved in an attempted murder of a Cheektowaga Police Officer. This investigation led to the arrest of the offenders.

The police department also continued a community awareness and education program in response to thefts of vehicles that were left running unattended and thefts of property from unlocked vehicles. A flyer was developed and distributed to advise the public of the risk of theft of unattended vehicles, as well as some simple deterrents to auto theft. Detectives also routinely surveilled locations, such as gas stations and convenience stores, and, when unattended vehicles were observed, detectives advised the owners of the risk of theft and New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law regarding unattended vehicles.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	**Total**	**Performance Measure**	**Total**
Investigations Initiated – Theft	208	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	0
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	346	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	276	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	0	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	130

Erie County District Attorney's Office

The Erie County District Attorney's Office received a $104,758 grant in 2023 to pay for training and a full-time assistant district attorney. The assistant district attorney assigned to 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 and other law enforcement agencies throughout the area to collaborate with ongoing investigations. The prosecutor vertically prosecutes the more serious motor vehicle theft crimes, as well as all the insurance fraud cases in Erie County.

Due to changes in the Bail Reform laws, and Raise the Age, motor vehicle theft offenders are arrested and then released because the offenses do not qualify them to be remanded, or they are turned over to Family Court where the same thing happens. These offenders proceed to commit other offenses after being released. The prosecutor has begun to employ Grand Juries on a number of these cases of adult offenders, successfully indicting many of them.

Vehicle theft in Erie County can be divided into two distinct types: crimes of opportunity and crimes for profit. Most vehicle theft cases fall into the first category and involve vehicles left running unattended or vehicles parked with the keys inside. The vehicles are often taken for joyriding or are stripped for parts and then dumped. These crimes seem to be committed mostly by people between the ages of 14 to 20. The second type of vehicle theft often involves drug-related thefts and/or thefts from rental agencies, which is a pervasive problem in the community. Many cars are being stolen from dealerships, rental agencies, and repair shops. The problem of the "Kia Challenge" where YouTube video's show people how to steal Kias without keys continued throughout 2023.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	**Total**	**Performance Measure**	**Total**
Investigations Initiated – Theft	223	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	42
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	1	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	63
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	0	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF cases	$7,938

Niagara County District Attorney's Office

The Niagara County District Attorney's Office received $109,443 in grant funding in 2023 to support a Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Unit, which consists 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 that all cases are prosecuted to the fullest extent possible.

Stolen catalytic converts and vehicles being stolen while left running or the keys still inside the vehicle continue to be a monumental problem in Niagara County. There have been a couple key arrests in these areas, and it is hoped that these arrests will lead to reductions in catalytic converter thefts and theft of running vehicles.

The Kia Challenge continues to be a major problem, specifically with a group referred to as the "Kia Boys" who go around stealing Kias and take them on joy rides. We believe most of these Kia Boys have been arrested and prosecuted successfully.

Incomplete data was sent for Niagara County DA

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	8	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	0
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	18	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	0
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	72	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF cases	$0

Niagara County Sheriff's Office

The Niagara County Sheriff's Office received a $20,000 grant in 2023 to pay for staff overtime and training. The Sheriff's Office Stolen Vehicle Task Force 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.

The Niagara County Sheriff's Office Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Task Force, with road patrol deputies and investigators from the Criminal Investigation Bureau, continued to work diligently to curb motor vehicle theft, larcenies of vehicle parts and accessories, and insurance fraud in 2023. Despite these efforts, the Kia Challenge and thefts of older model Chevys has increased throughout the year.

There have been successes though. An individual was arrested for multiple counts of fraud throughout Niagara County and an adjacent county. We also arrested multiple juveniles and adults for committing larcenies from vehicles, as well as auto theft. The use of analytical mapping, surveillance cameras, and data from partnering police agencies combine for a strong force against auto crimes.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	154	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	0
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	39	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	30	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	0	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	62

Niagara Falls City Police Department

The Niagara Falls Police Department received a $23,400 grant in 2023 to pay for 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 and emphasizes investigations and appropriate follow-up. In addition, the unit collaborates with the Traffic Division to identify suspicious accident reports and possible fraud cases.

The Niagara Falls Police Department covers an area of approximately 16.8 square miles while bordering Canada and consists of two international bridge crossings. In 2023 this grant money went to assist patrol and detectives in the Motor Vehicle Theft Unit which concentrated on stolen vehicle investigations (since the uptick of stolen Kia and Hyundai's) as well as stolen catalytic converters.

NFPD spent approximately 350 hours of overtime specifically on motor vehicle crimes. As Niagara Falls is a major tourist city with an additional 1 million people visiting annually, our officers and detectives are required to perform surveillance within the areas to deter and catch any criminals.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	427	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	0
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	170	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	135	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	5	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	38

Statewide

New York Anti-Car Theft and Fraud Association, Inc.

The New York Anti-Car Theft and 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 received a $65,100 Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud grant from DCJS in 2023 to produce 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 about motor vehicle theft and fraud to consumers 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.

The association's training efforts concentrated on both vehicle crime and insurance fraud, providing effective professional training in theft and fraud investigation and deterrence. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the association has now combined in-person conferences and trainings and records the meetings, trainings, and webinars so that those who could not attend in person can still receive the training and information. This has proven to be beneficial because it opens the training, and meeting to more agencies. Thus, the association continues to expand its outreach by improving cooperative working relationships with other associations and New York State agencies.

The spirit of cooperation fostered at the conferences and training events continues through the communication networks that are established among law enforcement investigators long after the programs conclude. 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 to aid with investigations of insurance fraud and other crimes through the sharing of information and expertise.

2023 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Seminars, Trainings & Conferences	10	Webinar Trainings Produced	5
Verified Attendees	981	Verified Webinar Views	119
MVT Articles Published	0	MVIF Articles Published	0
Webinars for Law Enforcement Agencies	24	Webinars for Prosecutorial Offices	24

V. Appendix—2023 Statistics

Rank	County	MV Theft	Rank	County	MV Theft
1	Monroe	6,762	32	Washington	41
2	Bronx	5,513	33	Clinton	40
3	Erie	5,497	34	Cayuga	36
4	Queens	5,153	35	Franklin	36
5	Kings	4,388	36	Chemung	32
6	New York	2,280	37	Fulton	31
7	Suffolk	1,531	38	Sullivan	31
8	Onondaga	1,482	39	Madison	29
9	Westchester	971	40	Montgomery	29
10	Nassau	889	41	Allegany	28
11	Richmond	604	42	Livingston	28
12	Albany	593	43	Herkimer	27
13	Niagara	300	44	Tompkins	27
14	Schenectady	243	45	Warren	26
15	Orange	214	46	Putnam	22
16	Rensselaer	200	47	Seneca	20
17	Oneida	195	48	Cortland	18
18	Broome	165	49	Greene	18
19	Dutchess	144	50	Otsego	18
20	Chautauqua	103	51	Columbia	17
21	Rockland	102	52	Delaware	17
22	Oswego	94	53	Orleans	16
23	Ontario	90	54	Chenango	13
24	Wayne	71	55	Essex	13
25	Saratoga	64	56	Schoharie	12
26	Ulster	59	57	Wyoming	11
27	Genesee	55	58	Tioga	7
28	Steuben	52	59	Lewis	6
29	St Lawrence	49	60	Schuyler	5
30	Jefferson	48	61	Yates	4
31	Cattaraugus	44	62	Hamilton	1

2023 Reported Incidents of Motor Vehicle Theft

Appendix—2023 Statistics *(continued)*

Rank	County	MV Insurance Fraud		Rank	County	MV Insurance Fraud
1	Brooklyn	14,614		32	Montgomery	14
2	Queens	8,420		33	Cayuga	13
3	Bronx	3,679		34	Chemung	13
4	Nassau	3,448		35	Genesee	13
5	New York	1,676		36	Otsego	13
6	Suffolk	1,080		37	Warren	13
7	Staten Island	963		38	Wayne	13
8	Westchester	538		39	Delaware	12
9	Erie	363		40	Clinton	11
10	Monroe	225		41	Madison	11
11	Albany	185		42	St Lawrence	11
12	Rockland	142		43	Cattaraugus	10
13	Ulster	131		44	Steuben	10
14	Orange	122		45	Columbia	9
15	Onondaga	112		46	Herkimer	9
16	Oneida	50		47	Livingston	9
17	Broome	49		48	Cortland	8
18	Niagara	42		49	Greene	8
19	Dutchess	38		50	Allegany	7
20	Rensselaer	36		51	Chenango	6
21	Schenectady	31		52	Franklin	6
22	Essex	29		53	Washington	6
23	Jefferson	26		54	Schoharie	5
24	Saratoga	26		55	Tioga	5
25	Ontario	21		56	Lewis	4
26	Oswego	21		57	Orleans	3
27	Putnam	21		58	Seneca	3
28	Tompkins	21		59	Yates	2
29	Chautauqua	19		60	Hamilton	1
30	Fulton	19		61	Schuyler	1
31	Sullivan	17		62	Wyoming	1