



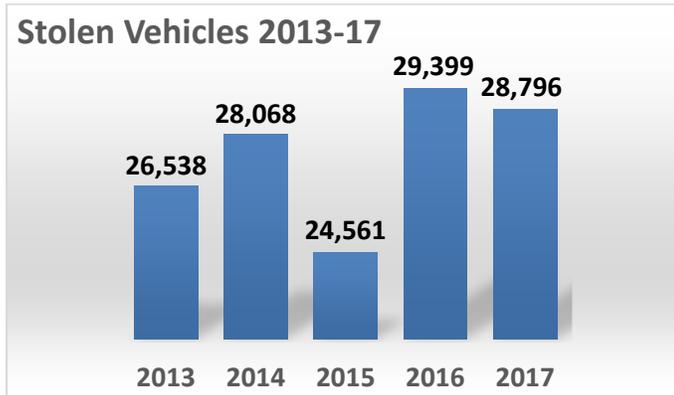
2018 ANNUAL REPORT

www.WaAutoTheftPreventionAuthority.org

Background: The Washington Auto Theft Prevention Authority (WATPA) was established when the Elizabeth Novak-Washington Auto Theft Prevention Act (E3SHB 1001) was signed into law and became effective July 1, 2007.

Washington remains at #4 nationally

Auto theft in Washington decreased 6% (per capita) in 2018 from 2017. Counties that experienced the most significant changes with 100 or more auto thefts were Lewis (-28%), Mason (-12%), and Thurston (-12%), and Grant (+22%). The four largest counties in Washington experienced, for the most part, decreases including King (-1% decrease), Pierce (-3%), Spokane (-8%), and Snohomish (+17%). These four counties accounted for 19,396 stolen vehicles or 75% of all vehicles stolen in Washington.



As of 2017 (the most current year for FBI statistics) Washington remains one of the top states for total auto theft. Washington cities or regions that are ranked nationally for auto theft include Vancouver/Portland area (#19), Seattle/King County (#25), Yakima (#31), and Spokane/Spokane Valley (#36). Although we experienced a slight decrease in 2018 based on state data, we must remain dedicated and focused on this ongoing crime problem that impacts too many victims.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
1	CA	CA	CA	CA	CA	CA
2	TX	TX	TX	TX	TX	TX
3	FL	FL	FL	FL	FL	FL
4	GA	WA	WA	WA	WA	WA
5	WA	GA	GA	GA	GA	GA
6	IL	MI	MI	IL	MI	CO
7	MI	IL	OH	OH	IL	IL
8	OH	OH	AZ	MO	OH	OH
9	AZ	AZ	IL	AZ	CO	MO
10	NY	MO	MO	CO	AZ	MI

Source: 2017 DOJ FBI Uniform Crime Report

Accountability – Fiscal stewardship is a priority for WATPA and in 2018 the WATPA Executive Director conducted site visits to all four grant funded venues. The purpose of these meetings was to interview staff regarding task force performance, inspect facilities and discuss the value of grant funded assets. Leadership and staff at each venue were welcoming and the visit found them to be performing at very high levels. A final report was published and presented to the WATPA Board of Directors in October.

2018 Accomplishments

Snohomish County Auto Theft (SNOCAT) Task Force (Everett and North Puget Sound area):

WATPA funds a Supervisor, three Detectives, a Prosecutor, and legal assistant in Snohomish County under the veil of a task force known as SNOCAT. The prosecutor is embedded with task force detectives and provides a unique and highly effective auto crimes enforcement team that is a model in Washington. SNOCAT detectives are reliable resources for all members of law enforcement in their region.

SNOCAT continues to be a strong leader in the areas of prevention through public outreach. Twitter is the primary social media platform utilized by SNOCAT (@SnoCoAutoTheft) and has 1,326 verified followers. SNOCAT intends to initiate a Facebook page and a public billboard campaign to supplement current efforts and further build outreach to the public.

Detectives also investigated and successfully prosecuted career auto thieves in Snohomish County. One case involved the tireless pursuit, and eventual capture, of a prolific auto thief that admitted to stealing over **10,000** cars in his life and at one point was stealing **10 cars per day**. This individual declared that he is not addicted to drugs, he is addicted to stealing Hondas.

To continue showing the scope of auto theft, SNOCAT Detectives interviewed a suspect who had been in possession of shaved keys. During the interview, the suspect admitted to stealing a vehicle that morning and abandoning the vehicle when he heard sirens. Detectives later revealed the location of six stolen vehicles and ultimately the suspect estimated he has stolen approximately **500 vehicles** in his adult life.

All three WATPA funded detectives initiated (on average) 57 cases each in 2018. The majority of these cases resulted in referrals for prosecution where 162 felony cases were prosecuted. Once referred to the prosecutor, 105 felony cases (many with multiple felony charges) were filed for prosecution. The prosecutor also served as an invaluable case development resource that not only approved search warrants for judicial review but provided crucial input during case investigations that ultimately leads to a higher rate of successful case prosecution.

Puget Sound Auto Theft Task Force (PSATT) – King and Pierce Counties

2018 was the first full year that PSATT was fully functional as a combined task force using detectives from King and Pierce counties. It is noteworthy that PSATT is made up of 10 detectives, two supervisors, a prosecutor and a crime analysis specialist. Of these assets less than 50% of the task force is funded by WATPA. The balance of staff is fully funded by local law enforcement and the Washington State Patrol (WSP).

PSATT has experienced an incredibly productive year in 2018. They have recovered 402 stolen vehicles valued at \$4.85m and have filed 224 criminal charges. One significant case of note involved a large organized investigation, during which detectives authored 12 search warrants and filed 28 Felony charges on several prolific auto thieves in the Pierce County area. There are also 20 more charges pending in this area and Oregon involving 12 additional suspects.

PSATT members have been leaders in providing auto theft training to police officers in Washington state. Training is being expanded in 2019 and will include 8-hour monthly class offerings to local detectives and patrol officers. Their work in arming officers with progressive tools to combat and prosecute auto theft is remarkable.

PSATT has also been a leader Public Outreach. In June of 2018 where they posted two radio informational ads on the 710 KIRO/ESPN Sports Radio. 710 Sports Radio was chosen because it has the most listeners on AM Radio in the Western region of the state. According to 710 KIRO ESPN Radio, the PSATT listener statistics are “off the chart in views”.

Spokane Police Department (Spokane metro area and northeast Washington):

The Spokane Regional Auto Theft Task Force (SRATTF) includes four Washington State Patrol (WSP) Detectives, one WSP Sergeant, a WATPA funded Detective from the Spokane Police Department (SPD) and a WATPA funded Deputy from the Spokane County Sheriff’s Office (SCSO). SRATTF is a resource available to law enforcement agencies throughout eastern Washington with 85% of their activity focused on Spokane County.

In 2018 the two WATPA funded detectives initiated 96 cases with 54 cases referred for prosecution. An example of the reach of the task force is a Spokane case that led to Okanogan County where, during the execution of the search warrant, detectives identified and recovered four stolen trailers and a stolen Corvette from the Spokane area. Additional case investigation aided the Okanogan County Sheriff’s Office with charging the suspect with multiple felonies.

Task force members worked with local media and partnered with the Spokane Police Department and the Spokane County Sheriff’s Office established an Auto-Theft

Awareness Campaign. During the month of October, Public Service Announcements were aired on Spokane CW22, KREM2 and KREM2 Social Posts. WATPA also worked with the Spokane Police Department to offer anti-theft devices known as “*The Club*”. The Clubs are handed out to owners showing proof of ownership of some of the most commonly stolen vehicles.

Clark County Prosecutor’s Office

Clark County has shown a continuous decline in auto theft over the past three years. The efforts of all Clark county regional law enforcement partners have been significant as the Portland/Vancouver area is one of the fastest growing hot spots for auto theft in America.

WATPA funds one dedicated prosecutor from the Clark County Prosecutor’s office that prosecutes exclusively auto theft and car crimes. This individual screens all auto theft related cases and is able to link common schemes and provide compelling evidence when prosecuting all auto theft related cases that come through the office. Additionally, this platform of knowledge enables the prosecutor to serve as a clearinghouse of auto crime information that provides them with a unique perspective when exploring innovative ways to prosecute complex auto theft cases

The Clark County Prosecutor’s Office handled over 300 auto theft related cases referred for prosecution in 2018. Over 80% of those cases were filed for prosecution that resulted in 275 cases either taken to trial or plea bargained.

Value added support to law enforcement and prosecution

The WATPA Board continues to award sponsorship funding to the Northwest Chapter of the Western States Auto Theft Investigators (WSATI) which is an organization that offers annual auto theft training to Washington police officers. The funding provides support to officers whose agencies may not have the training budget to send them. These funds provide *value added* support to law enforcement and amplifies efforts to reduce auto theft in Washington.

For the first time, WATPA was able to support local task forces and the Clark County prosecutor’s office by underwriting training at both national and regional seminars and conferences. These training opportunities not only provide WATPA funded personnel with information on emerging auto crime trends from around the country, the training also provided a platform for networking and information gathering that can be useful once they return home.

WATPA awarded Centralia PD \$500 in support of an innovative program to combat auto theft in their city. Residents register their vehicles with the police department and by doing so authorize Centralia officers to stop their vehicle, and inquire with occupants between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. This time period is when many auto thefts occur or when stolen vehicles are in transit.