

**Auto Theft in Washington:**  
*A growing crime problem that is outpacing other states in America*

| Auto Theft Rankings by State |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|                              | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
| 1                            | CA   | CA   | CA   | CA   | CA   | CA   |
| 2                            | TX   | TX   | TX   | TX   | TX   | TX   |
| 3                            | FL   | FL   | FL   | FL   | FL   | FL   |
| 4                            | GA   | GA   | GA   | GA   | GA   | WA   |
| 5                            | AZ   | MI   | IL   | IL   | WA   | GA   |
| 6                            | MI   | IL   | MI   | MI   | IL   | MI   |
| 7                            | IL   | AZ   | WA   | WA   | MI   | IL   |
| 8                            | WA   | WA   | OH   | OH   | OH   | OH   |
| 9                            | OH   | OH   | AZ   | AZ   | AZ   | AZ   |
| 10                           | NC   | NY   | NY   | NY   | NY   | MO   |

**According to the NICB<sup>1</sup>:**

- When most other states are seeing a decrease in auto theft, Washington moved up to number four from number eight nationally in auto theft.
- Movement from number 8 to number 4 nationally represents the largest ranking movement among all 50 states.
- Nine of the top 10 cities with the highest rate of vehicle theft were in California; #7 was Spokane, Washington.

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

**Grant Awards:** WATPA was awarded \$5,160,344 in 2013-15 grant funds for a variety of activities including: law enforcement, prosecution, crime analysis, technology and equipment, public awareness, training and education.

**Fiscal Stewardship:** Over the past year WATPA worked tirelessly to ensure the best use of funds by employing the following measures to increase the effectiveness of WATPA grant monies:

- During the summer of 2014, site visits and audits of all WATPA grant recipients were conducted.
- A complete revision of the grant recipient reporting process with focus on return on investment (ROI) and a change to a semi-annual reporting, from quarterly, reporting period.
- All grant participants actively participated in a state mandated 5% reduction exercise where all reductions were identified by the recipient and confirmed by WATPA.
- As part of the reduction exercise, grant recipients identified \$68,000 in potential savings and unspent funds that were re-allocated across the state in areas of high need to agencies advancing public outreach and innovative enforcement strategies.

**The importance of WATPA:** The mission of the Washington Auto Theft Prevention Authority is to prevent and reduce motor vehicle thefts in the State of Washington. The information that follows reflects WATPA’s impact on auto theft across Washington in 2014 by providing a small sampling of anecdotes from each region.



<sup>1</sup> National Insurance Crime Bureau based on 2013 UCR statistics

## **Southeast Region**

***Adams, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Klickitat, Walla Walla, and Yakima Counties***

- The WATPA funded auto theft task force detective responded to reports of heavy equipment being stolen in Yakima County and sold in Oregon. In late October Detectives executed a search warrant in Yakima and recovered over \$120,000 in stolen heavy equipment.
- Police agencies from the Tri-cities continue to be statewide leaders in the application of WATPA funded License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology and dissemination of auto theft related crime analytics throughout eastern Washington.

## **Southwest Region**

***Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, and Wahkiakum Counties***

- With the addition of a WATPA funded prosecutor, dedicated solely to auto theft cases, car crime prosecutions are at their highest level since 2004 and overall auto theft has declined 13% in Clark County.
- Collaboration among Pierce County agencies with auto theft cases has greatly increased in the past year with the restructuring of the Auto Crimes Enforcement Task Force (ACE). Local agencies are contributing detectives (in-kind) and the scope of the enforcement is amplified. In the first seven months of 2014, ACE either initiated or supported local agencies with 35 separate auto theft investigations.
- Auto theft is down 2% in Pierce County for the year ending in October 2014.



July 30, 2014 – Spokane, WA  
Spokane police combating car theft with Club lock giveaways!

December 14, 2014 – Clark County, WA  
The Clark County Sheriff's Office hopes to make a sizeable dent in local cases with the help of a Washington Auto Theft Prevention Authority grant that supports a prosecutor dedicated to convicting offenders of auto-related crimes.

## **Northwest Region**

***Clallam, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Mason, San Juan, Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties***

- South King County auto theft (PATROL) task force members disrupted a California organized crime cartel's container theft operation by executing search warrants in Sumner that recovered \$1.5m in high value items intended for large retailers.
- Snohomish County's auto theft task force (SNOCAT) member skills were actively used as part of the effort to locate vehicles during the OSO landslide recovery efforts.
- Multiple chop shops have been disrupted by SNOCAT detectives in unincorporated Snohomish County with arrests of prolific auto thieves.
- Both SNOCAT and PATROL task force detectives are statewide leaders in spreading the word to the public this year with auto theft prevention and education tips delivered through social media, PSA's in movie theaters, community outreach and bus banners on public transportation.

## **Northeast Region**

***Chelan, Douglas, Ferry, Grant, Kittitas, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane and Stevens Counties***

- Co-location of a WATPA funded Spokane PD (SPD) detective and a Spokane SO (SCSO) crime analyst with the WSP task force has proven highly effective and acted as an enforcement force multiplier in this region by combining limited resources into a focused and motivated group of detectives.
- The WATPA funded detective was assigned investigation of individuals involved in a Spokane area crime spree that resulted in filing of 28 felony charges, most of which were related to auto theft related crimes.
- The SCSO crime analyst has effectively gathered and shared information about Spokane related auto theft to local and regional law enforcement throughout eastern Washington.
- Arming citizens with information has been a priority for this task force as they provided WATPA funded prevention resources, information and educational materials to community members at regional fairs and public meetings.