# CCMTA Best Practice Models for Combating Auto Theft

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Prepared for CCMTA

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# 1 Introduction

Best practice models draw on the lessons learned from the review and evaluation of similar successful projects and are informed by research and the wider literature on best practice approaches.

This document will address the issue of stolen vehicles and suggest the best practice models to reduce vehicle theft, to fulfill the remaining item of the Anti Auto-Theft Project Group mandate.

As background, on October 29, 2001, Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA) held a special session to address the issue of stolen vehicles and the role provincial/territorial vehicle registrars could play in reducing vehicle theft. Seventeen priority items were identified from the session. Four areas were selected as items that registrars and CCMTA could address and make positive changes:

- Identify potential stakeholders and develop an infrastructure to facilitate the exchange of data and expertise.
- Develop national standard procedures for registering out of jurisdiction vehicles to produce a standard best practices guidelines document.
- Review the CCMTA Stolen and Wrecked Vehicle program to ensure jurisdictions are compliant and to recommend any changes or improvement to the program and potentially update the agreement.
- Evaluate the mandatory use of IRE by all Canadian jurisdictions.

# 2 Problem Statement

In Canada in 2004, approximately 180,000 incidents of motor vehicle theft were reported to police - an average of 493 vehicles a day.

Automobile theft is much more than an insurance problem; it's an expensive social menace that every year costs Canadians close to $1 billion: $600 million for insurers to fix or replace stolen cars, $250 million in police, health care and court system costs, and many more millions of dollars in correctional services expenses. [1]

The auto theft issue defies all boundaries: jurisdictional, political, geographical or administrative. Because of the changing trends and complexity of the issue, the auto theft fight requires the cooperation and involvement of many stakeholders.

As the vehicle theft landscape continues to evolve, so must the search for innovative solutions to combat the activities of determined vehicle thieves.

**What happens to a stolen car?**

A stolen vehicle generally meets one of four fates.

1. It may be dismantled completely or partially for parts.
2. It may be given a new identity with a false Vehicle Identification Number (VIN). To hide the car's origin, it will then be transferred to another province or to the United States for sale.
3. It may be packed in a shipping container and sent abroad with false export documents.
4. It may be taken for transportation or used in the commission of a crime.

[1] Except from the Insurance Bureau of Canada's website - Report on Auto Theft – August 2006

# 3 Project Group

The Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators is an organization established by the provincial, territorial and federal governments and related agencies to act as a neutral and independent coordinating body in all matters dealing with the administration, regulation and control of motor vehicle transportation and highway safety. Since 1993, private organizations have had the opportunity to become associate members of CCMTA.

The CCMTA includes three separate and distinct standing committees to accomplish its objectives. The committees are Drivers and Vehicles, Compliance and Regulatory Affairs, and Road Safety Research and Policies. The Anti Auto Theft Project group reports to the Drivers and Vehicles Standing Committee. This committee will continue to provide a forum for discussion and introduction of new ideas and strategies as they relate to auto theft.

The project group has worked actively with police, insurers, the motor trades, vehicle manufacturers, registration authorities and justice agencies to produce a range of best practice models to reduce vehicle theft. A decision regarding implementation of the models is up to the individual jurisdiction, as each will be faced with issues of competing priorities for available resources. Additionally, the demographics relating to the auto theft problem may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

The anticipated outcome of the implementation of the models is to make vehicles more difficult to steal, close the loopholes that professional thieves exploit, improve the flow of police and registration information nationally, and lead young offenders away from vehicle theft. As the dynamics of vehicle theft invariably change over time, the group will remain open to new strategies and amend or add to this document.

# 4 Best Practice Models

## Best practice model for registering out of jurisdiction vehicles

Registration authorities can take an active role in reducing vehicle theft by making it more difficult for criminals to fraudulently register stolen vehicles. Registration authorities need the support and ongoing commitment of key stakeholders such as insurers, motor trade organizations, automobile associations, law enforcement, government agencies, and vehicle manufacturers.

Ideally, all jurisdictions should standardize registration procedures (e.g. proof of identity and proof of entitlement) and require compulsory notification of written off vehicles.

Some suggestion to standardize registration procedures are:

1. Ensure all foreign vehicles go through the Registrar of Imported Vehicles Inspection Program before the vehicle is registered in Canada.
2. Accept only original documents required for registration.
3. Establish a process to record and verify odometer readings.
4. Car dealers should not be permitted to register or transfer vehicles online, unless appropriate and effective audit processes are in place.
5. Capture all information from temporary registration permits on a database.
6. Ensure Canadian computer systems decode the VIN to ensure it is a valid number.
7. Complete an exploded IRE search* of all out of jurisdiction vehicles. (The Interprovincial Record Exchange (IRE) is a network developed and managed by CCMTA, which connects the driver and vehicle databases of all Canadian jurisdiction motor vehicle departments, to provide for the electronic exchange of information between these jurisdictions.)
8. Disallow the active registration of the same vehicle in multiple jurisdictions. This can be achieved through preventing duplicate VINs, by jurisdictions that track vehicles by VIN. Additionally, a procedure should be in place to address this issue if it arises when registration is requested.
9. Physically inspect every out of jurisdiction vehicle to verify VIN integrity and documentation. All out of province vehicles, rebuilt vehicles, and salvaged vehicles should be checked by qualified inspectors trained in vehicle identification and re-numbering methods.

   An alternative would be targeted identity and safety inspections of high risk vehicles. High risk vehicles include:

   - repairable written-off vehicles
   - vehicles with damaged or missing identifiers
   - personal imports
   - rebuilt vehicles
   - stolen or recovered vehicles

10. Ensure the database of stolen vehicles is checked for every registration.

* The exploded search allows for a check of all jurisdictions and, since October 2006, RIV, CPIC Stolen Vehicles and Insurance Bureau of Canada.

## Best practice model for enforcement initiatives

### Dedicated Law Enforcement Auto Theft Teams

Implement jurisdictional law enforcement teams focused specifically to develop strategies to reduce auto crime. The teams would oversee and coordinate all law enforcement activities relating to combating auto theft. The teams would consist of independent municipal departments, law enforcement agencies, and insurance investigators. The emphasis would be organized crime investigations such as chop shops, re-VINing, vehicle identifications, exporting, and fraudulent claims and targeted enforcement.

Street Enforcement Teams

These tactical surveillance teams would:

- Identify and apprehend dangerous and prolific car thieves
- Work joint forces operations with other police agency's auto theft sections or property crime teams
- Conduct surveillance until the suspects exit the vehicle before making an arrest thereby eliminating vehicle pursuits and rammings
- Attempt to disable by pulling spark plug wires or fuel fuses prior to departure
- Use "show cause" reports to have offenders remanded in custody until trial
- Use various tools such as night vision, infrared cameras and flashers, and covert GPS to assist in surveillance

The dedicated law enforcement auto theft teams should have full-time media relations officers who:

- Ensure that auto theft awareness, education, and prevention remain in the forefront of public attention
- Develop and implement proactive communication strategies
- Conduct press conferences and media briefings
- Represent the teams at special events
- Coordinate media releases and events for provincial auto crime related programs
- Work in partnership with internal and external partners

### Police Traffic Helicopters

Police traffic helicopters are an invaluable tool to reduce auto crime. They are used in pursuits, street racing, impaired driving, auto crime, and other high risk criminal offences.

### Bait Cars

A bait car is a generic term used for a vehicle that has been rigged by a law enforcement agency with the intent of capturing car thieves. Special features include bullet-proof glass; automatic door locks; video cameras that record audio, time, and date; and the ability to disable the engine remotely. The practice does not violate entrapment laws, since the suspect is not persuaded to steal the vehicle by any means other than their own motivation. The bait car is a phenomenon in the study of criminal behavior since it offers a rare glimpse into the actions and reactions of a suspect before, during and after the crime. Unlike other crimes caught on surveillance cameras, suspects at least initially believe and react as if the crime has been successful, until the bait car is retrieved.[2]

[2] wikipedia.org

Bait cars are usually equipped with GPS tracking systems. Bait car programs increase the level of enforcement through the use of technology rather than increased manpower. They also minimize the danger to police and the public by avoiding pursuits and rammings. When supported by a broad based media and marketing campaign, these programs can result in long term reductions in auto crime activity.

In order to ensure the success of a bait car program, the following practices should be implemented:

- Implement an aggressive media and marketing program. This can plant the seed that there are far more bait cars in place than there actually are.

  An effective program could include television, radio, and newspaper advertising as well as banners, posters, and bus shelter murals. Also consider an internet website (i.e. baitcar.com), which shows videos of real bait car thefts and the ensuing arrests. These publicly-viewed videos are embarrassing to the thieves and can be a deterrent to further thefts.

- Change the bait vehicles so the thieves will not recognize bait cars. Use vehicles that are among the most frequently stolen but change the colour and style often.

- Partner with the auto crime section of the local police force

A bait car program can produce successful results. For example, the bait car program in B.C. is credited for reducing auto theft in Greater Vancouver by 10% in 2004 and 11% in 2005.[3] The program has been expanded to include recreational products such as snowmobiles, ATV's. seadoos, motorcycles, and boats and motors.

### Auto Theft Prevention Programs

#### Citizen's Crime Watch Volunteer Program

The premise of this program is to recruit private citizens as a crime watch volunteers. Once a month two volunteers team up for 6-hour evening street patrols. Equipped with access to CPIC data on donated laptops or palm pilots, portable computers and radios, the teams patrol high auto theft areas and act as additional eyes and ears for the police. They input licence plate numbers of parked and moving vehicles. If the input matches the plate number of a vehicle listed on a "hot sheet" of stolen autos, the volunteers keep an eye on the suspect auto and alert the police about their finding. This program has been successful in B.C. where Citizen's Crime Watch volunteers help to recover between 1000 and 1400 stolen vehicles.

#### Limited Hours on the Road Program

A distinctive decal or other vehicle identifier that is placed in the rear window tells police that this vehicle is rarely driven between certain hours such as 1 am and 5 am. When police spot a vehicle with a decal on the road between these specified hours, they stop the vehicle to verify the driver's licence and registration.

This program is a simple, cost effective, proven way to reduce the risk of auto theft and an effective deterrent to would-be thieves.

[3] Baitcar.com

### Vehicle Recovery Technology

In jurisdictions where the vehicle recovery rate is low, the insurance industry can help increase the recovery rate by funding the use of vehicle recovery technology by police. These systems allow police to track a stolen vehicle through a cellular signature. Once the vehicle's general vicinity has been identified through it's proximity to cellular towers, it can be located by specially equipped police cars. The most popular systems are manufactured by Lo/Jack and Boomerang.

These systems result in increased recoveries and occasionally lead police to commercial crime operations such as chop shops.

### Recovering Auto Theft Claims Costs

Implement provincial programs that will initiate civil litigation against car thieves involved in the theft of or possession of stolen vehicles in order to recover all of the associated costs including:

- vehicle repairs of replacement
- loss of use
- property damage
- refund victim deductibles
- all investigative expenses
- legal costs

The programs would target adult and young offenders convicted of theft of vehicle or possession of stolen property, charged but not yet convicted of theft of vehicle or possession of stolen property, and apprehended but not charged with theft of vehicle or possession of stolen property.

After a judgment is obtained against an auto thief the judgment stays in effect for up to 20 years. Those with unpaid debts would be disqualified from obtaining a driver's licence, registration, or insurance.

Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI) implemented a similar program in 2001 which has been successful in generating revenue and has received strong public support. The Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) has recently implemented a similar pilot project called Project No Free Ride designed to enhance existing law enforcement and auto theft programs and act as a powerful deterrent against future auto theft. In addition, ICBC is taking civil action to recover more than $2 million in claims costs from the "top" convicted auto thieves.

### Automatic Licence Plate Recognition

Automatic licence plate recognition (ALPR) is a mass surveillance method that uses optical character recognition on images to read the licence plates on vehicles. As of 2006 systems can scan number plates at around one per second on cars travelling up to 160 km/hr. They can use existing closed-circuit television or road-rule enforcement cameras, or ones specifically designed for the task. They are used by various police forces and as a method of electronic toll collection on pay-per-use roads, and monitoring traffic activity such as red light adherence in an intersection. They are also used at ports, airports, Olympic sites, bridge crossings, tunnels, and national security sites and for crime scene mapping.

After the licence plate has been identified it can then be cross-referenced against a police database. The database is comprised of stolen vehicles, uninsured vehicles, vehicles with stolen licence plates, vehicles associated to prohibited or unlicensed drivers and vehicles associate to person of interest.

## Best practice model for use of auto theft devices

### Mechanical Immobilizers

Mechanical immobilizers include steering wheel locks, shifter locks and brake pedal locks. Although these devices can be good visual deterrents, an electronic immobilizer provides much better protection against auto theft.

### Vehicle Alarms

Vehicle alarms draw attention to would-be thieves with sirens, beeps and other loud noises. Some systems trigger flashing lights too.

False alarms have reduced the public's faith in this type of anti-theft device. However, a quality product that is professionally installed or adjusted can offer good protection.

An alarm may deter a break-in, but it can't stop someone from driving off with your vehicle. To do that, you need an alarm system that includes an electronic engine immobilizer.

### Electronic Immobilizers

Among all types of anti-theft devices, electronic engine immobilizers protect you best against vehicle theft. Electronic immobilizers require a special key or small electronic device to start a vehicle's engine.

An electronic immobilizer is a device fitted to a vehicle to prevent it from being stolen. Immobilizers work by isolating two separate circuits that the vehicle requires to run (that is, the starter, ignition, fuel or engine management systems). This effect is achieved by inserting a relay into each circuit and controlling the activation of the relays via intelligent solid state circuitry.

In January 2005, the Department of Transport amended Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (CMVSS) 114, which is part of the *Motor Vehicle Safety Regulations* (MVSR). The purpose of the amendment is to require that vehicles be equipped with anti-theft immobilization devices. More specifically, the Department requires that all vehicles having a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) of 4 536 kg or less have an immobilization system installed that, at the choice of the manufacturer, meets one of the following standards:

- Underwriters' Laboratories of Canada CAN/ULC-S338, "Standard For Automobile Theft Deterrent Equipment and Systems: Electronic Immobilization;" or,
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Regulation No. 97, "Uniform Provisions Concerning Approval of Vehicle Alarm Systems (VAS) and of Motor Vehicles with Regard to Their Alarm Systems (AS)."

### Best Practice Model for Use of Electronic Immobilizers

1. Introduce a voluntary electronic vehicle immobilizer program by offering an incentive such as a rebate which provides a discount off the retail price for installation of an immobilizer. The program could target specific vehicles, communities or persons. This may involve partnering with the auto insurance industry in the member jurisdiction.

   A voluntary program is likely to have a high level of public acceptance and take-up as well as being relatively inexpensive and straightforward to implement.

2. Develop security ratings for vehicle manufacturers to raise public awareness and encourage industry best practice.

3. Develop other public awareness and marketing campaigns to promote electronic immobilizers to achieve high take-up rates.

## Best practice model for young recidivist car theft offender programs

### Background

Australia provides several programs to young offenders with a history of motor vehicle related offences. Entry criteria is limited to recidivist motor vehicle offenders aged 15 to 20. Participants are usually referred by the courts or by social agencies. The programs uniquely address two major community challenges – youth unemployment and youth crime (particularly motor vehicle theft).

The ten week programs are offered within the environment of a mechanical workshop, offering young people hands-on training in auto mechanics, spray painting, body work, detailing, workshop safety, driver education, literacy, and communication skills. The programs also offer vocational support such as work experience, interviews, job placement, and links to employment and further education. Legal motor vehicle related recreational activities such as go-cart racing are offered along with other positive social and recreational experiences.

The programs could be classified as personal development programs as they provide opportunities for participants to assess their recent past and work with a youth worker to make choices to address their offending behaviour and make positive changes in their lives. Although most of the courses offered are not directly aimed at confronting offending behaviour, they encourage participants to use their interest in motor vehicles in a legal and positive way.

Over a five year period, one program called “Hand Brake Turn” placed 72% of young participants into employment and educational placements. Independent research has demonstrated that 90% of these young people were still in placements after 12 months. The research also determined that 80% of all participants had not re-offended up to 12 months after completing the program.

In Australia, these programs are funded by the federal government and supported by state governments, the Australian Youth Foundation, law enforcement, and NRMA Insurance who serve as the projects major corporate sponsor. Each project is also supported by regional industries and businesses.

### Model Criteria

In order to establish successful programs, the following criterion is essential:

- Clear, attainable, and measurable objectives
- Highly driven staff who are committed to working with young people
- Managers who are committed to their staff, young people, and to continuous improvement
- Regional or local based advisory committees who guide the project and link it to local needs
- Sponsors and funding bodies
- Support from social agencies to assist with housing, transportation, and other support services for participants
- Community support
- Strategically locating the programs in a location that has a critical mass of automotive trade businesses and the potential capacity to absorb participants into automotive related employment
- Specific evaluation methodology

## Best practice model to ensure secure identification of motor vehicles

### VIN Security

The metal Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) plate affixed to the vehicle chassis with pop rivets is the primary source of vehicle identification.

1. Manufacturers are encouraged to mark the VIN on all major components of the vehicle to help identify theft recoveries.
2. Encourage motorcycle manufacturers to mark the VIN on the engine as well as the motorcycle frame.
3. Build a field into jurisdictional registration computer systems to capture the part number of motorcycle engines.
4. Implement a VIN etching program to provide a visual deterrent.

### Secure Identification Labels

### Background

This section provides educational background for future consideration and/or use.

Sophisticated identification labels with features designed to prevent counterfeiting and recognizable tampering/removal have been developed and are used successfully overseas. These products include specialized footprint labels, coded data formats, self-destruct features, and sub-surface data printing systems. The use of secure identification labels will assist law enforcement agencies in identifying stolen vehicles and components to promote successful prosecutions.

Footprint labels are resistant to heat, engine, transmission, and coolant fluids and normal environmental exposures. Special dyes are mixed into the adhesive which react with the painted substrates. This leaves a 'footprint' that is visible under ultra-violet light if the label is removed. The labels will self-destruct if any attempt is made to remove them.

Labels may incorporate coded data such as hidden logos or holograms that require special retro-reflective viewing conditions for verification.

Sophisticated laser based sub-surface imprinting techniques add counterfeit protection and "life-of-vehicle' durability. Access to the data face is impossible without destroying the label.

In order to be successful, secure identification labels must reflect the latest advances in technology, law enforcement agencies must be trained in identifying and verifying vehicles and components that may be stolen, and they must be equipped with the appropriate verification and detection equipment.

### Identification of Vehicle Components

To be effective, identification of vehicles components must make the task of re-identifying a vehicle too much trouble and too risky for professional thieves. To do this the identification methods must be overt so that everyone knows it is there, it must be very difficult to tamper with or remove, it must be easy and relatively inexpensive to apply, and it must be easily identifiable by police and registration authority personnel.

Microdot technology can be used successfully as a theft deterrent. It meets all of the above criteria and thieves will find it almost impossible to defeat.

## Microdot Technology

The application of microdots is one of the most advanced identification system available for protecting your vehicle from theft. Once applied, a vehicle then has its own “DNA”, making it traceable by law enforcement back to the lawful owner and undesirable for a thief to steal

The information coded on the dot is either the original manufacturers VIN or a unique PIN number which is linked to the VIN of the vehicle through national databases only accessible by law enforcement. The finding of any microdot allows police to prove the true ownership of any asset and in doing so, identify stolen parts and make verifiable prosecutions.

Microdots are about the size of a grain of sand, each coded with lines of text applied using a sophisticated laser process.

The dots are applied to assets using an adhesive specially developed for microdots which contains an ultra-violet trace that fluoresces under UV black lights typically used by law enforcement and forensic personnel.

Once applied, microdots are resistant to most acids, solvents, road salts, heat, and significant damage would need to be done to an asset to remove them. The dots are read using a simple magnifying reader commonly available from most electronic or hardware stores.

## Microdots on Vehicles

Each vehicle is marked with thousands of uniquely coded microdots which are simply sprayed on the chassis, compliance plates, and high theft engine components. Microdots may also be applied to other parts of the vehicle including alloy wheels, DVD’s, and stereo equipment.

Window and engine warning decals are also fitted to every marked vehicle to aid in theft deterrence and recovery.

As it is near impossible to remove the thousands of microdots applied to a vehicle, professional thieves run a very high chance of being either caught with stolen items or can be identified later as the distributor of stolen parts through the finding of just one microdot.

Microdots may be applied aftermarket.

### Intensive Marking to Prevent Vehicle Theft

Intensive Marking is an aftermarket identification process available for the protection of a vehicle against theft and is used in the identification and tracing of its parts following a theft.

The process consists of applying a unique code by means of a sandblasting and electric engraver to glass, lights, mag wheels, engine parts and other components on a vehicle. In order to add to its deterrent value, distinctive decals should be displayed with a unique symbol well recognized by the police and organized criminal groups involved in vehicle thefts.

The process should be esthetic, visible to the naked eye (Minimum of ¼"(6mm) high and 3/16"(5mm)) and should not require any specialized equipment to read or decipher. It acts as a pre-inspection on vehicles being insured or registered and deters fraudsters from insuring paper cars, cloned vehicles, previously damaged and salvaged vehicles and also uncovers odometer rollbacks.

### Applying the Intensive Marking

The Intensive Marking identification code should be engraved on automobiles, motorcycles, small and large trucks, motor homes, heavy equipment, boats and recreational vehicles. It is recommended that a minimum of 50 parts be marked on automobiles and 125 parts on large trucks, heavy equipment and boats.

A sandblasting technique should be used to apply the identification code on all glass and plastics such as windows, sunroofs and lights. It should also be used to mark body panels on large vehicles and mag wheels on automobiles and trucks.

An electric engraver should be used for parts inside the engine compartment and in difficult locations requiring smaller lettering.

The code should be apposed to the vehicle using a sandblaster method and electric engraver, that is virtually impossible to remove, modify or obliterate therefore making the vehicles marked less attractive to professional thieves and distributor of stolen parts.

A quality control system should be maintained. in order to ensure the quality and integrity of all markings.

### Unique Identification Code

An Alphanumeric Identification Code should be used, composed of letters and a sequential number that cannot be deciphered, created or recreated to match the vehicle on which it is applied. The code should be entered into a database and cross-referenced to the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) that is available to the police and registration authorities 24/7. All pre-owned marked vehicle VINs should be validated through a recognized Vehicle Identification Number data provider to establish the present or past status of the vehicle.

The code when viewed by police and other authorities should allow them to quickly determine the location where the vehicle was originally marked. It assists in tracing the origin and true identity of a suspected stolen vehicle thus becoming an indispensable investigational aid.

## Best practice model to create high public awareness

The following are some recent effective examples of programs created to create high public awareness that could be considered for all jurisdictions.

1. Implement a jurisdictional limited hours on the road program such as B.C.'s "Combat Auto Theft (CAT) program. In this programs, vehicle owners register their vehicles which them allows law enforcement officers to stop and check these vehicles between the hours of 1:00 am and 5:00 am when a large percentage of vehicles are stolen. Thieves are less likely to steal a vehicle with a CAT sticker for fear of being pulled over by a police officer.

2. Create various advertising campaigns to educate the public on how to protect their vehicles from auto theft. An example is the "Layered Approach to Protection": The four layers of protection are:

    - Common sense – remove keys from the ignition, lock doors and windows, and park in well-lit areas.
    - Warning devices – audible alarms, steering wheel/brake pedal locks, wheel/tire locks, theft deterrent decals, identification markers in or on vehicles, window etching.
    - Immobilizing devices – smart keys, fuse cut-offs, kill switches, and starter, fuel, or ignition disablers.
    - Tracking devices – devices that use Global Positioning Systems (GPS).

3. Develop advertising campaign directed at the importance of securing vehicle keys. Never leave keys inside a vehicle and know the location of your keys at all times. Vehicles are often stolen from self-serve fuel stations while owners are paying the attendant or when vehicles are left to warm up outside.

4. Create an awareness strategy to educate teens about the dangers of auto theft. This could be a powerful educational tool for use by teachers, school liaison officers, insurance brokers, and public safety advocates.

    For example, B.C. is producing a raw and edgy auto theft prevention video that will be shown to high school students across the province to inform them about the dangers and tragedies of auto theft with the ultimate goal of saving lives and reducing auto crime. The auto theft video will provide a graphic deterrent to auto theft and will focus on the stories of offenders and victims with an emphasis on the loves that have been stolen as a result of auto theft. The video will be fast paced and designed to hold the attention of teenage viewers.

5. Develop partnerships with property owners (malls and parking lots) and business improvement associations. Such things as parking lot signage, volunteer bicycle patrols, and advertising campaigns would help deter auto thieves.

## Best practice model for vehicle inspection programs

Most jurisdictions have a passenger vehicle inspection program, either annual, point-of-sale, or upon admittance to the jurisdiction. It is important that private vehicle inspections verify and validate the identity of vehicles presented for inspection. VIN discrepancies, alterations and tampering are not being detected as evidenced by a number of police investigations and subsequent seizures of stolen vehicles.

Continuous improvement of system operation and vehicle inspection standards will improve the detection of cloned stolen vehicles and other types of masking vehicle theft.

- Ensure jurisdictional inspection facilities sight two matching VIN's
- Provide regular training on the detection of "bad" VIN's or CMVSS labels
- Provide an educational package with visual aids as an ongoing skills development plan
- Have a strong inspection facility audit program which includes regularly scheduled audits

## Best practice model to safeguard against identity theft

Jurisdictions are encouraged to provide educational material to clients regarding identity theft as this is strongly tied to auto theft.

### What Is Identity Theft?

Identity theft occurs when someone gains access to another person's personal information, such as the DL number, social security number, bank or credit card account numbers, and uses them to commit fraud or theft. An impostor can use your identity to open fraudulent credit accounts, secure loans for cars and housing, or steal money from your bank accounts.

### Identity Theft Involving Vehicles

Identity theft can include theft of driver licenses, birth certificates, or banking information to obtain false identification. Identity thieves can use any of these documents to secure a new identity and purchase vehicles and insurance in the name of the identity theft victim. Vehicles and insurance are often purchased and sold using false identities and false credit cards.

In most of the cases involving vehicles, vehicles are purchased at an auto dealership with a credit card. The vehicles are not high in value and therefore the purchase by a credit card does not raise suspicion at the dealership. Depending on the nature of the financial transaction (cash, cheque or credit), either the id theft victim, motor dealer, or the credit card company can become a victim of identity theft.

### Impacts to Vehicle Owners

- Vehicles improperly registered in identity theft victim's names
- Insurance claims filed in identity theft victim's names
- The victim's policy history can be affected affecting insurance rates
- Debt for insurance policies taken out in a false name
- Credit rating affected by debts incorrectly in their name
- Collection agencies trying to collect debt from a victim of identity theft
- Fraudulent driver licence activity by the thief resulting in motor vehicle tickets, or using a driver license to as identification to purchase other services
- Loss of the value of a vehicle (motor dealers or credit card companies)

### Best Practices to Protect Vehicle Owners

- Link registration, licensing, and insurance databases with drivers' licence databases in order to inform all agencies that a driver's licence has been stolen
- Develop and implement a standard identity theft statement to be completed by the victim
- Develop and distribute used auto buying guides

### Top Ten General Best Practices to Avoid Identity Theft

1. Shred all financial documents before throwing them out.
2. Purchase a locking mailbox or route mail to a post office box.
3. Distrust e-mail links — instead, type addresses directly into the address box.
4. Protect your computer with a firewall and anti-virus software.
5. Don't disclose social security numbers or other confidential information.
6. Download software with caution — avoid downloads from questionable web sites.
7. Create unique passwords, commit them to memory.
8. Don't open e-mail attachments from unknown sources.
9. Don't put personal information such as your driver's licence number on cheques.
10. Purchase identity theft protection.

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