

FY 2023 ACTIVITIES REPORT



MOTOR VEHICLE CRIME PREVENTION AUTHORITY



PREPARED FOR THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE APRIL 1, 2024

Prepared in coordination with the



Texas Department of Motor Vehicles

MVCPA Board

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Executive Summary

Created in 1991, the Motor Vehicle Crime Prevention Authority (MVCPA) has become an integral part of and an invaluable resource to Texas Law Enforcement. In 2023, MVCPA celebrated the 30th anniversary of the first grants issued in 1993. The vision of the MVCPA is to empower local law enforcement agencies and communities to combat and prevent motor vehicle theft, motor vehicle burglary, and fraud related-motor vehicle crime so that all Texans will be free from harm and loss caused by these types of crime. Motor vehicle crime has debilitating effects on people's lives. The losses of nearly 4 billion dollars each year are staggering. To combat these losses, MVCPA funded 24 law enforcement taskforces throughout the state employing 239 law enforcement investigators who have received highly specialized training in the detection of stolen motor vehicles and apprehension of criminals who commit motor vehicle crime. This Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 activities and funds report was prepared to inform the Texas Legislature of the status of the MVCPA and of the efforts and activities of the statewide network to reduce motor vehicle crimes as required by statute (see Transportation Code §1006.101).

In FY23, MVCPA collected \$113 million in fees from insurers and received \$14.98 million in appropriations. This is 13.2% of the amount collected by MVCPA and below the 20% or \$22 million required under Transportation Code §1006.153 (e). This reduced amount diminished MVCPA's ability to fully support the increasing needs of local police departments and sheriff's offices. Criminal organizations work to find new ways to prey on individuals, businesses, and government agencies. They adapt to changes in statutes, values of vehicles and parts, and government processes. In FY23, the prices of catalytic converter component parts increased, and the prevention of catalytic converter theft continued to be a priority of law enforcement. Criminals became more violent, especially when attempting to steal catalytic converters. The increase in violent crimes have resulted in the death of innocent victims and in one case the death of an MVCPA taskforce investigator trying to prevent the theft of a catalytic converter from his personal vehicle.

MVCPA funding allows local police departments and sheriff's offices to increase resources available in communities to work together in combatting statewide motor vehicle crime. The MVCPA grants provide for: salaries, specialized equipment, training to combat these crimes, ways to educate citizens how to prevent these motor vehicle crimes, increased border security, and the tools necessary to prevent stolen vehicles from crossing the international border into Mexico or into other countries through seaports.

MVCPA At A Glance

MVCPA Fee Collections and Appropriations



Fiscal Year	Fee Collected By MVCPA	Amount Appropriated to MVCPA	Difference
2022	\$110,180,192	\$14,979,605*	\$95,200,587
2023	\$113,255,394	\$14,979,605*	\$98,275,789
Period Total	\$223,435,586	\$29,959,210	\$193,476,376

* reflects 5% reduction mandated by state leadership.

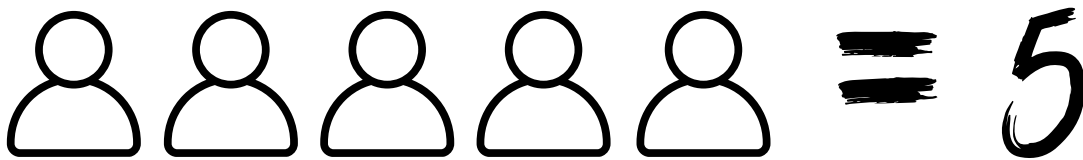
Vision Statement

The Motor Vehicle Crime Prevention Authority exists to empower local law enforcement agencies and communities to combat and prevent statewide motor vehicle crime.

Governance

MVCPA is comprised of 6 Governor appointees and the Director of Public Safety of the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS). The governor appoints 2 representatives from the following groups: consumers of insurance, writers of insurance, and law enforcement. MVCPA is administratively attached to the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV). MVCPA has an agreement with TxDMV to separate the policymaking responsibilities of the authority and the management responsibilities of the department.

TxDMV Full Time Employees (FTEs) for MVCPA



Total Administrative Costs Percent = 4.3%

FY23 Appropriation

\$ 14,979,605

FY23 Funds Collected by the MVCPA

\$113.3 million

FY23 Registered Vehicles as of 8/31/2022 – TxDMV

25.9 million



CY23 Motor Vehicle Thefts

124,575



CY23 Burglary from a Motor Vehicle and Theft of Parts

184,214



CY23 Losses from Motor Vehicle Burglary and Theft

\$4.0 Billion

**FY23 Arrests for Motor Vehicle Theft by Grant
Funded Investigators**

2,592

**FY23 Arrests for Burglary of Motor Vehicle by
Grant-Funded Investigators**

599

**FY23 Arrest for Fraud-Related Motor Vehicle
Crimes by Grant-Funded Investigators**

127

**FY23 Recovered Stolen Vehicles by Grant-Funded
Investigators**

13,446

**FY23 Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) (68A)
Inspections for Texas Title Transactions by Grant-
Funded Investigators**

27,365

**FY23 Other VIN Verification Inspections to
Confirm Identity of Vehicles**

23,162

**FY23 Number of Vehicles Inspected at
International Bridges and Outbound Ports**

4,395

MVCPA Strategic Goals

Mission Statement

All Texans are free from harm and loss caused by motor vehicle crime.

Philosophy

The Texas Motor Vehicle Crime Prevention Authority is an evidence-based, strategy-driven, and community-centric network that supports regional taskforces, improves coordination, deploys equipment, and provides clear messaging with a goal to combat and prevent motor vehicle crime. The Authority seeks to support regional and global law enforcement responses to obtain the best outcomes for Texas and its citizens.

Strategic Goals

Goal 1: Performance-Driven Law Enforcement.

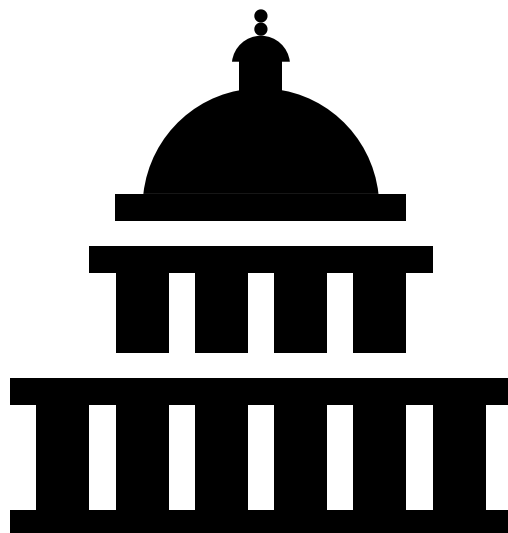
Goal 2: Reduce crime through optimized services and innovation.

Goal 3: Community-centric.

Goal 4: Effective Fee Generation.

Changes from the 88th Legislature

In FY22, the prices of catalytic converter component parts increased and the prevention of the theft of catalytic converters became a priority of the Texas Legislature and law enforcement. Criminals became more violent, especially when attempting to steal catalytic converters. The increase in violent crimes resulted in the death of a Motor Vehicle Crime Prevention Authority (MVCPA) taskforce investigator who was trying to prevent the theft of a catalytic converter from his personal vehicle. The 88th Legislature passed a bill impacting MVCPA. Senate Bill 224 (SB224), 88th Legislature, Regular Session, created enhanced criminal penalties related to criminal conduct involving catalytic converter theft, and administrative penalties relating to regulatory enforcement of metal recycling entities (MRE). The Motor Vehicle Crime Prevention Authority (MVCPA) was charged with the development and implementation of a Plan of Operation to coordinate efforts with the Texas Department of Public Safety (TxDPS), the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR), and the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV). The partner state agency efforts are to focus on the review the records of regulated entities involving the purchase, acquisition, sale, or transfer of catalytic converters removed from motor vehicles; and to suspicious activities that may be detected through the review of those record. MVCPA began coordinating and collaborating with the partner state agencies regarding SB224 requirements in the latter part of FY23.



Performance Measures

Statutory Measures

Grants are issued from the appropriation to the MVCPA to fund police and sheriff taskforces to combat motor vehicle crime and the financial losses associated with these crimes to Texas, its citizens, and businesses. Texas Transportation Code Section 1006.151 requires MVCPA to track performance measures associated with its grant program. The table below shows the statutory performance measures for FY19 to FY23 reported by grant-funded taskforces:

Summary of Statewide Statutory Performance Measures

Motor Vehicle Theft (MVT)						
Activity	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	Percent Change
Recovered Stolen Vehicles	11,678	12,860	11,540	12,497	13,446	7.59%
Cleared Motor Vehicle Theft Cases	13,491	19,258	15,835	9,373	9,990	6.58%
Arrests – Motor Vehicle Theft	3,257	3,593	3,171	2,655	2,592	-2.37%
Burglary of Motor Vehicles (BMV)						
Activity	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	Percent Change
Cleared Motor Vehicle Burglary Cases	2,565	2,419	1,762	2,315	7,530	225.27%
Arrests - Burglary of Motor Vehicle	930	736	663	632	599	-5.22%
Fraud-Related Motor Vehicle Crime (FRMVC)						
Activity	FY 2019	FY 2020*	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	Percent Change
Cleared Cases - FRMVC	NR	134	224	331	370	11.78%
Arrests - FRMVC	NR	51	78	119	127	6.72%

*FRMVC was included as a performance measure by the 87th Legislature.

The data in the previous table shows the effectiveness of the taskforce’s ability to pursue investigations of motor vehicle crimes. From FY2022 to FY2023, there was a slight increase in the number of recovered stolen vehicles, cleared motor vehicle theft cases, cleared cases involving motor vehicle fraud, and arrests related to motor vehicle fraud. The greatest increase seen was in the number of cleared motor vehicle burglary cases. The increase was due in large part to a tremendous backlog of cases within the Harris County Taskforce. A sergeant and three additional investigators were tasked with reviewing approximately 8,900 cases that had been pending due to minimal leads or evidence. A secondary review was conducted prior to closing the cases.



MVCPA Grant Activity Measures

In addition to the statutory performance measures above, the MVCPA collects additional grant activity measures to determine the effectiveness of its taskforces. As demonstrated later in the FY23 Funds Report, most of the grant funds are used to hire, train, and retain specialized motor vehicle crime law enforcement investigators. Taskforces report grant-funded activities to demonstrate their progress and success in combatting motor vehicle crime in their communities and across the state of Texas. Below is a snapshot of the reported activity conducted by the police and sheriff taskforces in FY 2023:

Fiscal Year 2023 MVCPA Taskforces Performance Measures

Measure Description	Total Number
Investigation	
Motor Vehicle Theft cases presented to prosecutors	3,362
Burglary of Motor Vehicle cases presented to prosecutors	940
Fraud Related Motor Vehicle Crime cases presented to prosecutors	182
Other felony cases identified during MVT and BMV investigations	2,002
Other misdemeanor cases identified during MVT and BMV investigations	827
Number of cases of insurance fraud identified	534
Total of all arrests resulting in cases submitted to prosecutors	4,837
Human Trafficking	
Number of arrests for human trafficking while investigating Motor Vehicle Crime	9
Drugs	
Number of arrests for Motor Vehicle Crime where drugs were present	261
Pounds of drugs and controlled substances seized	145 pounds
Illegal Weapons	
Number of weapons recovered	303
Arrests for weapon smuggling	4
Value of weapons recovered	\$155,392
Equipment¹	
Number of units of equipment recovered	290
Value of equipment recovered	\$8,575,134
Law Enforcement Collaboration and Coordination	
Taskforce investigators assisted outside agencies to conduct their investigations by performing part of the investigation or using specialized motor vehicle crime investigative skills as resource. (# of times)	
Assists to all outside agencies	15,532
Assists within their own departments/office	4,712
Assists for other agencies within the grant coverage area	4,844
Assists to TxDMV and Tax Assessor Collector (TAC) investigations	1,051
Assists to DPS and other state law enforcement criminal investigations	565
Assistance to federal law enforcement investigations	326

[1] Equipment is construction, farm tractors, excavators, compressors, lift machines and other items that are vehicles or are transported on trailers.

Fiscal Year 2023 MVCPA Taskforces Performance Measures

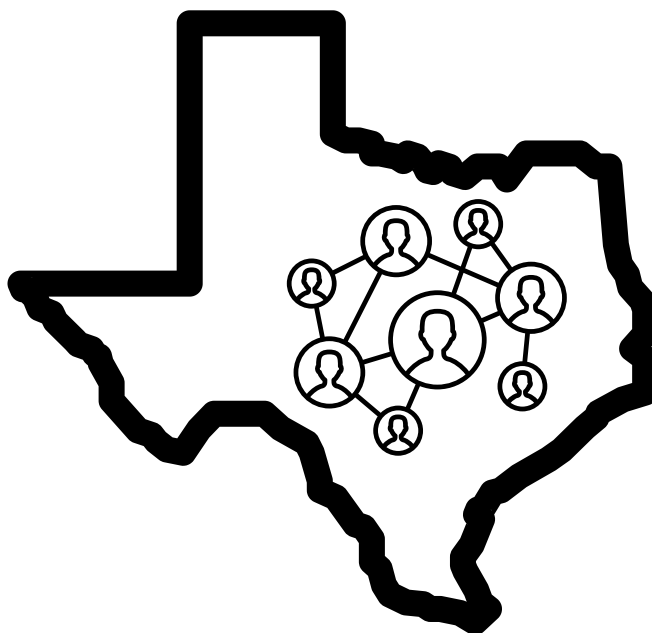
Measure Description	Total Number
Motor Vehicle Crime Intelligence Gathering and Dissemination	
<i>Usually, criminal conspiracies organized by groups and repeat offenders account for a high volume of motor vehicle crime. Taskforce investigators conduct covert operations and provide regional communication on these groups and repeat offenders.</i>	
Groups (criminal networks) of motor vehicle crime offenders identified operating in taskforce communities	633
Offenders with three or more MVT arrests identified operating in communities	1,373
Number of covert operations conducted	3,230
Number of intelligence gathering /sharing meetings attended by investigators	1,282
Number of crime analysis bulletins written and disseminated by taskforce investigators	2,609
Number of Border Incident Assessment Reports submitted by taskforce investigators to a Regional Joint Operations Intelligence Center	651
Vehicles Inspected	
Vehicles inspected using confidential means (Required for the public to complete certain title transactions at the TxDMV or Tax Assessor-Collector)	27,365
Vehicles inspected at businesses, dealerships, other transactions or looking for stolen vehicles	23,162
Local Business Operations Support	
Number of inspections of licensed businesses related to vehicle enterprise (salvage yards, repair shop, used parts recyclers, used car dealership, salvage rebuilders, etc....)	595
Technology Dependent Investigations	
Bait Vehicles and Bait Equipment²	
Bait vehicle deployments	1,170
Number of arrests from bait vehicle deployments	157
License Plate Readers (LPR)	
Number of LPR Deployments by taskforce investigators	6,588
Times those investigators were provided an alert from an LPR. (Note: some agencies have access and get alerts from third-party LPR data providers)	2,845
Number of vehicles recovered from LPR detection	1,979
Number of arrests from LPR detection	143

[2] Bait refers to a vehicle used by law enforcement agencies to capture car thieves or property thieves who steal items from cars. Bait cars are normally purchased and owned by law enforcement agencies and are typically modified with audio/video surveillance technology which can be remotely monitored and controlled. These also use geo-fences and tracking technology.

Law Enforcement Activities

MVCPA combats statewide motor vehicle crime by funding experienced criminal investigators in local law enforcement agencies. MVPCA provides training, communication, intelligence sharing, and networking needed to support and manage the statewide system. The grants also include data collection, intelligence sharing and reporting. The MVCPA funded investigators, along with the support that their local agencies provide, are extremely effective in combating motor vehicle crime. Local law enforcement agencies rarely have specialized motor vehicle crime investigators or crucial equipment and rely primarily on MVCPA grant-funded programs. MVCPA grants, combined with local agency support, results in local law enforcement agencies having highly trained investigators performing specialized motor vehicle crime investigations for their jurisdictions and the State of Texas.

Of the 24 taskforces funded in FY 2023, 10 are single jurisdiction and 14 are multijurisdictional. Under current MVCPA rule, taskforces must provide a minimum of 20 percent cash match for all MVCPA grant funds received. However, after years of stagnant and reduced funding to the MVCPA, many taskforces provide more than the required 20% cash match. The MVCPA grants incentivize taskforces to use their investigators and equipment in a coordinated effort for the benefit of their region and the entire state. Taskforce investigators routinely work with each other directly across the state and share valuable intelligence during monthly MVCPA webinars. They also hold their own regional law enforcement criminal intelligence sharing meetings about criminal trends and technology used to steal vehicles.



The MVCPA taskforces directly assisted other law enforcement agencies over 15,000 times to investigate crimes tied to motor vehicle crime. The MVCPA taskforce investigators assisted other law enforcement units (e.g. robbery, homicide, narcotics, etc.) within their own agencies an additional 4,700 times. Law enforcement agencies funded by MVCPA collaborate beyond their city or county limits to confront the mobile nature of motor vehicle crimes.

Virtual Command Center and Taskforce Intelligence Sharing

The MVCPA Board committed to continue the coordination of the taskforces using the Motor Vehicle Crime Investigator Virtual Command Center (VCC) on the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal (LEEP). The VCC has seen increased taskforce participation and activity. Taskforces and several other non-taskforce jurisdictions are also represented.

Additionally, the MVCPA hosts a law enforcement webinar each month for the purpose of sharing intelligence related to trends in motor vehicle crime. All MVCPA grant-funded taskforces, other jurisdictions, and NICB participate in the sharing of trends, criminal methods discovered, and criminal actors identified. NICB will also provide stolen motor vehicle border crossing intelligence. This is especially important due to the mobility of criminals committing motor vehicle crimes. The sharing of criminal trends is crucial as crime patterns will often begin in one jurisdiction and ultimately appear in other jurisdictions.

Techniques of MVCPA Taskforces

The MVCPA law enforcement taskforces use various methods to prevent and combat motor vehicle crime. Below is a summary of taskforce techniques and examples to show their activities in FY2023:

Investigations

MVCPA funded law enforcement officers investigate motor vehicle crimes reported by the public (“reactive”) and monitor and reduce community vulnerabilities to such crimes (“proactive”). MVCPA funded investigators work to recover stolen vehicles, arrest offenders, and clear open criminal cases as required by the MVCPA statute. Investigators will also write reports, conduct covert operations, share intelligence, and coordinate with other law enforcement agencies. The collaboration between taskforces can lead to identifying multiple criminals and their networks, developing leads and witnesses, training other law enforcement officers, supporting state and federal agencies in ongoing investigations, assisting prosecutors, and establishing resources for victims and community members.



The **City of Corpus Christi Auto Theft Taskforce** coordinated with their Robbery/Homicide unit to investigate an aggravated robbery that later turned into a homicide. A victim heard someone rummaging in his car that was parked outside, walked out to confront the offender, and was ultimately shot. The victim later succumbed to his injuries. Acting quickly, the City of Corpus Christi Auto Theft Taskforce canvassed the area and was able to obtain surveillance of the incident and share it with their Robbery/Homicide unit. With the information provided and collaboration, the Corpus Christi Police Department was able to identify and apprehend a dangerous offender.

Identify Vehicles

In most countries, it's a requirement for vehicle manufacturers to mark a permanent VIN engravement on the chassis or engine for the purposes of identification. Manufacturers of trailers, equipment, and certain parts will often follow national and industry standards for marking and maintaining identification of their produced items. Records of these marks and identifications are maintained in databases managed by the National Insurance Crime Bureau. Properly credentialed and MVCPA trained law enforcement investigators use these databases to identify and recover vehicles where criminals have worked to remove, conceal, or change the VIN markings.

The **City of Houston Auto Theft Taskforce** received a call after hours regarding a LoJack tracked stolen Cadillac Escalade. North Shepherd Patrol officers tracked the vehicle to a residence where they found the stolen vehicle and a suspect was detained. Officers could see from the street numerous vehicles in different stages of being stripped and parts showing signs of being cut by a blow torch. Taskforce officers responded to the scene where they assisted patrol in identifying 3 engine/transmissions and drafting a search warrant. A total of 6 vehicles were recovered and the suspect was ultimately charged. During the fourth quarter of FY 2023, the City of Houston Auto Theft Taskforce recovered 197 vehicles valued at \$7,440,373



Communicate and Collaborate Across Jurisdictions

Unlike most crimes, motor vehicle crime is often mobile, crossing multiple counties and state jurisdictions. To effectively combat motor vehicle crime and the illegal use of stolen vehicles, taskforces depend on communication and collaboration. The MVCPA taskforces perform their investigations with and across local, state and federal agencies and jurisdictions. Some grantees assign MVCPA funded investigators to anti-gang or violent crime units, as there is frequently a connection between these types of crimes and motor vehicle crime. This is especially true when investigators work to identify and interrupt criminal enterprises. Taskforce investigators communicate with other taskforces, other law enforcement agencies, motor vehicle manufacturer representatives, insurance industry professionals, as well as motorists and families in the communities they serve. They receive, provide and analyze intelligence data through MVCPA Virtual Command Center (VCC). When taskforces identify criminal patterns or suspects, they disseminate that information across jurisdictions. This often includes across state lines, where Beaumont, El Paso, Lubbock, Paris, and Potter County taskforces routinely coordinate with other states like Louisiana, Oklahoma, and New Mexico.

The **Beaumont Auto Theft Taskforce** completed a yearlong investigation that involved the theft of over 50 trucks. The investigation involved thousands of pages of documents with 63 search warrants. The Beaumont Auto Theft Taskforce worked numerous hours in collaboration with the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and the U.S. Attorney's Office. The investigation was ultimately filed by the U.S. Attorney's Office as a Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) case. The investigation spanned across multiple counties and regions involving crimes such as: aggravated robbery, aggravated kidnapping, aggravated assault, insurance fraud, narcotics trafficking, auto thefts and auto burglaries.



The **Burnet County Auto Theft Taskforce** assisted with an investigation where Austin Police Department, Travis County Sheriff's Office, Burnet County Sheriff's Office, Coryell County Sheriff's Office, Elgin Police Department, Manor Police Department and Mustang Ridge Police Department all collaborated to recover 9 stolen travel trailers from across the North and East Central Texas area. Video surveillance provided evidence of the same suspects delivering the stolen travel trailers to Toll 130 and Highway 183 near Mustang Ridge. Two search warrants were executed, and multiple offenders were identified. With agency collaboration and intelligence shared, it allowed for the suspects to be identified in multiple jurisdictions.

Identify Prolific Offenders

Numerous motor vehicle crimes are committed by the same individuals or groups. These prolific offenders (3 or more arrests) are identified by taskforce investigators who spend time analyzing multiple streams of information. They review offense reports, witness statements, and attend monthly MVCPA intelligence briefings to help identify these offenders.

The **City of Victoria Auto Theft Taskforce** collaborated with the Montgomery County Organized Crimes Unit to identify two suspects who had committed two separate ATM thefts in Victoria and later in Montgomery County. The subjects were part of a crime ring that was committing numerous ATM thefts in multiple Texas cities and other states. Offenders were utilizing stolen vehicles to commit ATM thefts. Over \$79,000 in cash was recovered in a separate ATM theft, where the suspects were pursued and abandoned the ATM cash box.



The **City of Mansfield Auto Theft Taskforce** was contacted by Ellis County Sheriff's Office about a possible chop shop operation outside Waxahachie, Texas. The Dallas Police Department contacted Ellis County Sheriff's Office and asked them to check the address for a stolen vehicle that had been tracked there. When officers from the Ellis County Sheriff's Office arrived, they located the stolen vehicle. The City of Mansfield Auto Theft Taskforce responded to assist and took over the investigation. The taskforce was able to identify and recover 21 vehicles in total. The estimated recovery was \$117,525.

Business Support

Economic motor vehicle theft and fraud-related motor vehicle crime impacts legitimate local businesses. Motor vehicle crime offenders either steal their property or set up illegal competition, reducing or eliminating profits from legitimate local businesses. Taskforces help by conducting inspections of salvage yards, parts recycling centers, salvage rebuilders, and other motor vehicle-related businesses. When stolen vehicles and parts are identified, the taskforces either work with local businesses to identify and interrupt the criminal network that brought the stolen items into the system, or they stop the illegal business through arrests and recoveries.

The **Pasadena Auto Theft Taskforce** identified a vehicle that was being used to transport stolen vehicles to various locations. Further investigation and surveillance revealed the owner of the vehicle also owned and managed several properties in the area. An inspection was conducted by the Pasadena Auto Theft Taskforce on an auto mechanic shop. During the inspection, numerous stolen vehicles were identified in different states of disassembly. As a result of this business inspection, 9 stolen vehicles were recovered, and intelligence of additional criminal elements was obtained.

Technology

Specialized equipment used by motor vehicle crime investigators includes high-tech surveillance and recording devices, vehicle identification cameras, Automatic License Plate Readers (ALPR), bait trackers, and parts marking technology. Most equipment purchased with MVCPA grant funds is so specialized, that it is rarely purchased by local law enforcement agencies without MVCPA grant funding. The ALPRs are devices that can read license plates, connect to state and national database of reported stolen vehicles, and quickly inform investigators of a stolen vehicle (called a “hit”) in their vicinity. LPRs are also used to provide location intelligence to investigators about patterns where cars are stolen and recovered. LPR detections accounted for a significant portion of the vehicles recovered by MVCPA funded investigators.

The **City of Dallas Auto Theft Taskforce** received an ALPR notification regarding a stolen vehicle that had been taken from Love Field Airport. Officers were able to locate the stolen vehicle in a closed business parking lot. After further surveillance was conducted, officers were able to identify 2 additional new 18-wheeler tractor trucks that were reported stolen with a combined value of over \$300,000. Four suspects were arrested and charged.



With technology advancing, the methods criminals use to illegally reap economic gain from motor vehicle crimes have also become more technologically sophisticated. To keep pace with those criminal methods, investigators develop more sophisticated techniques to identify and arrest offenders who commit motor vehicle crimes. The taskforces use software, computer skills, social media, bait cars, bait trailers, bait equipment, license plate readers, surveillance equipment, and when authorized by courts, tracking devices. To mitigate losses, the MVCPA and its taskforces regularly work with the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) and manufacturers to identify motor vehicle vulnerabilities that result in theft. Taskforces statewide have observed an increase in programming devices being utilized by criminal organizations to steal high end motor vehicles. Criminals are using the programmers and high-tech printers to create working key fobs and fraudulent identification labels to mask the vehicle's identity and sell the stolen vehicles to innocent purchasers.

The **Burnet County Auto Theft Taskforce** assisted the **City of Austin Auto Theft Taskforce**, Williamson County Sheriff's Office, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the Texas Department of Public Safety (TxDPS) with the investigation of stolen Dodge "Hellcats," skid steers, and trailers. As a result of the joint investigation, 12 vehicle programming tools were seized, and several arrests were made of individuals charged with the cloning of stolen vehicles and distribution of narcotics.

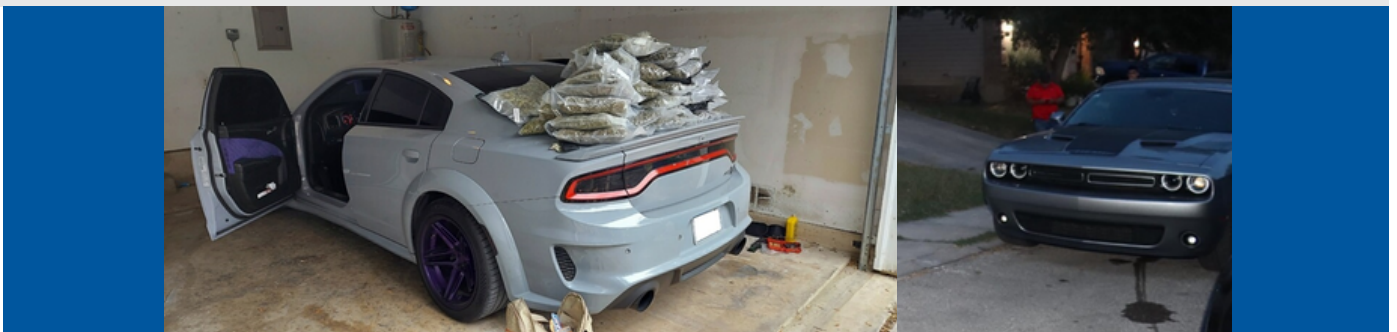


Fraud-Related Motor Vehicle Crime

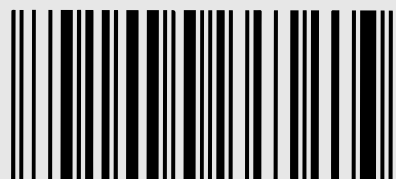
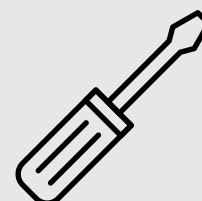
Fraud-related motor vehicle crime costs Texans millions of dollars each year. One of the costliest forms of fraud involves the fraudulent sale of motor vehicles to innocent purchasers. In this type of fraud, there are often multiple victims. The first victim is the person whose vehicle was stolen. The second victim is a person who purchases a stolen vehicle that has been represented as a legitimate vehicle using fraudulent VIN labels and a fraudulent Certificate of Title. Criminals target the uninformed who may not know the legal processes to purchase and register vehicles. This type of fraud can be financially debilitating to Texas families.

When system weaknesses are identified and corrected to reduce fraud, criminals adapt and look for new methods to continue their fraudulent schemes. In one example of registration fraud where criminals were using fraudulent temporary license plates to avoid paying registration fees or hide the identity of a stolen vehicle, the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles cut off access to fraudulent dealers and added additional security features to temporary license plates. Criminals began stealing license plates from similar vehicles, creating fictitious metal plates, and using other technology to disguise the identity of a stolen vehicle or their own vehicle used to commit criminal activity.

The **City of San Antonio Auto Theft Taskforce** received information that possible stolen late model, high-end Dodge vehicles were at a residence in San Antonio. It was reported the residents were installing paper plates in place of the metal license plates late at night. Surveillance was set up on the location and the visible license plates returned to vehicles that did not match the make/model of the vehicles they were on. San Antonio Auto Theft Taskforce investigators coordinated with the San Antonio Police Department Street Crimes Unit to contact the individuals at the residence. The occupants were interviewed and during the course of the investigation, probable cause was developed to obtain a search warrant. It was determined the suspects were conducting VIN swaps on high-end Dodge vehicles that had been stolen from cities throughout Texas and Arkansas. Four stolen vehicles were recovered: two Dodge Chargers, a Dodge Challenger, and a Ram TRX with a total value of \$211,000. The equipment to create the fraudulent VINs and manufacturer's labels (computer, printer, lamination machine, etc.) was seized along with a stolen firearm and \$19,000 in cash. The suspect was also wanted for active out of state warrants for similar criminal activity.



The **Harris County Auto Theft Taskforce** was notified about a vehicle that was reported stolen to the Houston Police Department and was pinging at a location on the east side of Harris County. Investigators arrived and waited for a key holder to arrive. A key holder arrived and brought out the stolen vehicle, a white Audi SUV. The key holder advised she was not the person who leases the property but was doing a favor. Investigators entered the property and observed several high-end vehicles parked inside a garage. It was advised the business was a tinting business, but no tint rolls were observed. Vehicle Identification Numbers (VINs) for the vehicles were checked and a Camaro, a BMW, and a Mercedes car were found to be stolen. A white Jaguar, black Mercedes SUV, and a white Mercedes car were also discovered to have altered VINs. The stolen vehicles were recovered, and the altered VIN vehicles were removed from the property for further investigation.



Criminal Gangs

The MVCPA taskforces work individually and together to interrupt organized crime networks and enterprises. Many taskforces view organized crime as a major cause and influence of motor vehicle theft in their communities. Taskforces often identify economic criminal groups, gangs and cartels operating motor vehicle theft operations. Taskforces report how their department's narcotic and gang units routinely ask for the assistance of their auto theft taskforce for the expertise of a motor vehicle investigator. Stolen vehicles are used by gangs for drug trafficking, human trafficking, and violent criminal activity.

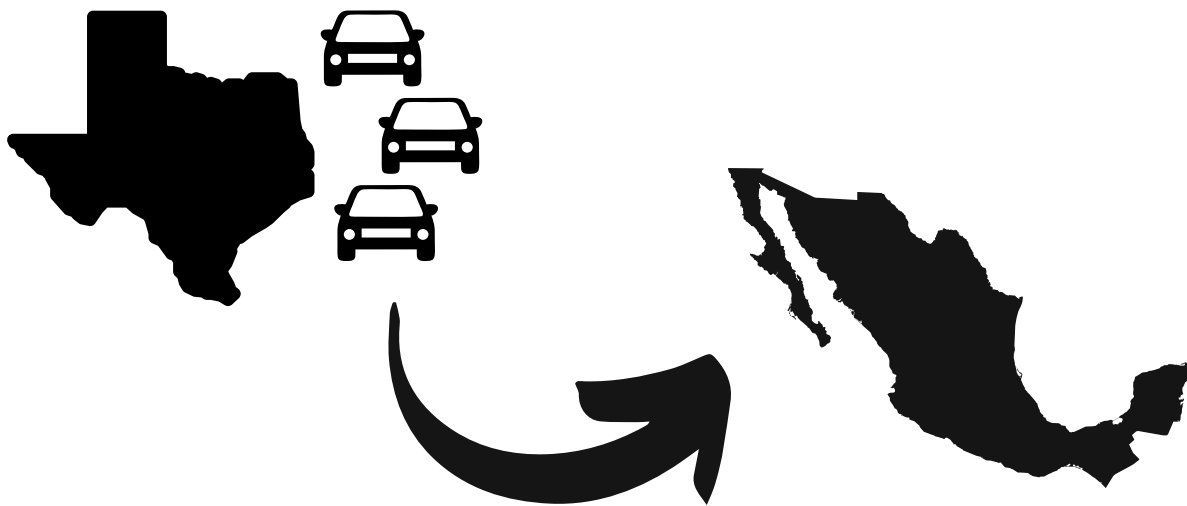
A Customs Border Protection (CBP) Supervisor from a bridge in Laredo called the **City of Laredo Auto Theft Taskforce** stating they had stopped a 2018 White Kia with paper tags going outbound with a report of it being listed as stolen from San Antonio. Upon checking the VIN number, it revealed the vehicle was stolen in an aggravated robbery out of San Antonio. The subject was detained. City of Laredo Auto Theft Taskforce investigators interviewed the subject and learned he resided in Mexico in a city named Nuevo Laredo. The subject further revealed an organized operation beginning with the receipt of fraudulent e-tags, a receipt, observing the bridge to determine if CBP were working the bridge, and a promise to receive \$200 for the successful crossing of the vehicle. The subject advised the other party involved in the operation was his cousin who worked for the Cartel Del Norte.



Border Security

The MVCPA taskforces designated as border security grant jurisdictions collaborate with multiple agencies along the US-Mexico border and in the seaports. Taskforces work diligently to reduce the number of stolen motor vehicles being used for human trafficking and the smuggling of narcotics and weapons. This work includes: surveillance operations, providing criminal intelligence briefings, identifying criminal actors, gangs and disrupting criminal enterprises. Border Security taskforces routinely collaborate and conduct joint investigations with local, state, and federal agencies.

The **Potter County Auto Theft Taskforce** assisted the Department of Public Safety's (DPS) Criminal Investigation Division (CID) on two search warrants. DPS CID had been contacted by the Oklahoma City PD regarding a possible stolen or cloned vehicles being registered in Oklahoma to persons with an Amarillo addresses. DPS CID and Potter County Auto Theft Taskforce investigators located two stolen and cloned vehicles at the residence. A second search warrant was executed down the street where a third stolen and cloned motor vehicle was identified. The residents of the two addresses own a business together. The business is located in the Midland and Odessa area associated with the oil fields. A month later the assigned DPS CID working the cloned vehicle case was in El Paso assigned to the border. Another clone associated with the Amarillo clones was located by the DPS CID agent parked at a hotel. The **El Paso Auto Theft Taskforce** was contacted by DPS CID. Information was gained that the cloned vehicles were being purchased via social media, taken to Mexico, and being sold.



Fiscal Year 2023

MVCPA Border Security Taskforces Statutory Performance Measures[3]

Number of stolen motor vehicles recovered	4,366
Number of motor vehicle theft cases cleared	5,607
Number of arrests for motor vehicle theft	848
Number of motor vehicle burglary cases cleared	7,310
Number of arrests for motor vehicle burglary	468
Number of Cleared Cases - FRMVC	228
Number of Arrests - FRMVC	93
Standard Legislative Budget Board Border Security Performance Measures Designated Taskforces	
Intelligence referrals	259
Lbs. of drugs seized	14
Arrests for smuggling	1
MVCPA Additional Border Security Performance Measures	
Number of vehicles inspected at outbound international bridges and ports	3,599
Value of vehicles recovered at border (and ports)	\$96,702,716
Number of arrests resulting in cases charged	2,367
Number of vehicles recovered from Mexico	133
Value for vehicles recovered from Mexico	\$4,190,308
Number of cases with one or more persons identified as transnational actors	350
Number of groups, gangs or associates identified as transnational	33
Number of arrests – transnational	120
Collaborations with US Customs and Border Patrol	490
Collaborations with other federal agencies (DHS, FBI, etc.)	253
Number of arrests for motor vehicle theft or burglary where drugs were present	125

[3] The measures in this table are subsets of prior reported statutory and MVCPA performance measures.

Training and Professional Development

MVCPA provides specialized motor vehicle theft investigator training to law enforcement officers. Local businesses usually provide sites where newly trained investigators can practice on different types of vehicles. MVCPA facilitates training composed of instructors from DPS, TxDMV, NICB, and the Texas Association of Vehicle Theft Investigators. MVCPA provides beginner and advanced auto theft trainings, reimburses travel, manages registration, purchases training supplies, and provides electronic education materials.

The training provides comprehensive skills-based training to motor vehicle crime investigators. This is accomplished by using the most knowledgeable instructors, subject matter experts, and the latest crime investigation methods and technology. The training meets TCOLE continuing education credits for the law enforcement officers completing the course. Training is provided by MVCPA at no cost to law enforcement agencies. The agencies pay for employees' travel.

Training is developed based on current trends and process changes affecting law enforcement statewide. When the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles redesigned temporary tags, a training module was developed to provide training to patrol level officers to identify valid tags and recognize when the temporary tags could be fictitious. When an increase of fictitious and fraudulent titles was noticed, training was developed to provide officers with common themes criminals are using to sell stolen vehicles with fraudulent titles and fictitious identifying labels.

The **Dallas County Auto Theft Taskforce** investigators attended one of the Motor Vehicle Dealership Fraud Investigation Training offered by the MVCPA. Eight days later, on February 24, 2023, the Dallas County Auto Theft Taskforce was contacted by a Dallas dealership about an individual attempting to purchase a vehicle using fraudulent identification. The taskforce was able to utilize MVCPA training in just over a week of receiving it. On March 24, 2023, the Taskforce was called again to the same dealership and arrested another person also attempting to purchase a vehicle using fraudulent identification.



Educating the Public

MVCPA uses a variety of web-based tools to promote motor vehicle crime prevention efforts to the public. MVCPA frequently uploads motor vehicle crime prevention information on social media platforms - Facebook, Twitter, MVCPA TxDMV website, and links to taskforces across the state (e.g. commercials, YouTube videos, etc.) to remind the public to protect their motor vehicles.

Funds appropriated for MVCPA purposes are used to conduct "...educational programs designed to inform motor vehicle owners of methods of preventing motor vehicle burglary or theft and fraud-related motor vehicle crime" in accordance with Transportation Code §1006.154(a)(3). MVCPA also educates the public with print materials. Funds were used in previous years to produce and procure printed materials for statewide distribution. These materials are still relevant and are still being distributed. Materials include brochures in English and Spanish, reminder magnets, and coloring books for children to remind their parents about motor vehicle crime prevention. MVCPA uses these materials to encourage Texans to join law enforcement efforts to reduce motor vehicle crime. The taskforces and MVCPA communicate and collaborate with state agencies, community organizations, business groups, and insurance industry stakeholders like NICB to promote and expand the MVCPA crime prevention message. The MVCPA distributed the following materials in FY23.

Education Material Distributed to Taskforces and Other Law Enforcement

15,300+

**Printed material
(brochures and
coloring books)**



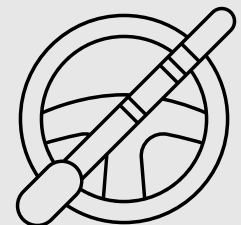
11,845+

**Items of
promotional
material**



72+

**Steering wheel
clubs**



MVCPA Social Media

MVCPA also uses social media to communicate motor vehicle crime prevention methods to the public. MVCPA has social media platforms Facebook and X, formerly known as, Twitter. Many of the taskforces also have social media accounts. MVCPA links to these taskforce's social media pages across the state. MVCPA encourages all taskforces to use their social media to increase the coverage and impact of motor vehicle crime prevention messages. [Click here to view the MVCPA Facebook page.](#)

The **Smith County Auto Theft Taskforce** investigators assisted Marshall Police Department, Longview Police Department, and the Dallas Police Department by identifying and recovering 2 cloned GMC trucks reported stolen out of Dallas. Investigators worked in conjunction with agencies to assist in the investigation and raise awareness in the area that such items were being sold on Facebook Marketplace and individuals that were secondary victims and bought the vehicles were out in excess of \$20,000 dollars each after purchasing the cloned vehicles. Two other cloned vehicles were recovered during 68-A inspections.



Educational Activities by MVCPA Taskforces

Taskforces plan their educational activities throughout the year and use grant-funded personnel and MVCPA print and promotional materials to develop their local approaches to educating their community. Many use both English and Spanish to get their messages out. Taskforces are encouraged to collaborate on educational programs whenever feasible and information is often shared during monthly MCVPA-hosted webinars in which taskforces participate.



Law Enforcement Action	Number of Activities
Taskforce Investigators Show Up at Community Events to Teach How to Avoid Motor Vehicle Crime	
Number of educational outreach events (includes trade show, exhibits, booths at community events, stock shows, vehicle displays/demonstrations, brochures deliveries [i.e. HOAs, Apt.'s] etc.)	746
Taskforce Investigators Teach the Community How to Avoid Motor Vehicle Crime	
Number of media outreach (includes public service announcements, press releases, and interviews)	861
Number of purchased advertisements in local outlets	24
Number of social media postings	2,641
Number of vehicle report card initiatives	2,217
Number of outdoor public notification signage deployed	2,464
Taskforce Investigators Serve Their Communities by Showing How to Avoid Motor Vehicle Crime	
Number of vehicle identification number (VIN) etchings conducted	1,452
Number of direct contacts to people needing assistance and/or information (phone/e-mail/ other media)	70,087



Insurer Refunds

23 refund requests were received in FY 2023.

3 refund requests were approved by the MVCPA Board.

3 refunds were made.