

# Assessment of Motor Vehicle Thefts in Colorado 2016



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## Purpose

The Auto Theft Intelligence Coordination Center (ATICC) has prepared the following assessment regarding the occurrence of motor vehicle theft in Colorado, during the period of January 1, 2016, through December 31, 2016.

Data used in this report is sourced from the Colorado Stolen Vehicle Database Repository administered by the ATICC. The repository contains records of all stolen and recovered vehicles entered and removed from the Colorado Crime Information Center (CCIC).



## Key Findings

- The Colorado Stolen Vehicle Database Repository captured a total of 18,047 motor vehicle thefts statewide during 2016;
- Compared to the 14,859 thefts that were reported during 2015, Colorado experienced a 21.55% increase in motor vehicle thefts during 2016, however this is about an 8% decrease over the 2015 which was an increase from 2014.
- 65.16% of stolen vehicles were reported in the Gold Camp area, 19.94% in Pikes Peak area, 8.33% in Longs Peak area, 2.22% in the Grand River area, 1.75% in the Four Corners area, and 0.88% in the area of High Prairie.
- 16,115 stolen vehicles were recovered in 2016, which equates to an 89.3% vehicle recovery rate;
- While 16,115 vehicles were recovered, only 7,624 recoveries entered into CCIC included a theft address; therefore, 47.31% of recovery records statewide do not include a recovery address– a mandatory entry in the “locate vehicle” mask of CCIC. However, agencies are bypassing the “locate vehicle” screen and either clearing or deleting the vehicle entry. Currently we have discovered that the “CV” entry is not properly capturing the data, this issue is scheduled to be corrected by CBI in the first quarter of CY 2017.
- The completion of information in the ATICC supplemental continues to be negligible as several agencies are failing to enter the datasets in this mask. Which is supported by an 8.7% decrease of data entry from 2015 to 2016.
- The top five vehicles stolen statewide in 2016 were (in ranking order): Honda Accord, Honda Civic, Dodge Ram Pickup, Ford F250, and F150.
- Although mostly accurate, the ATICC continues to strive to improve collection standards and account for gaps that exist.
- Reporting standards in 2016 are similar to 2015 through the ATICC database. However, the ATICC database results should not be directly compared to the 2016 FBI Crime in the US Report.

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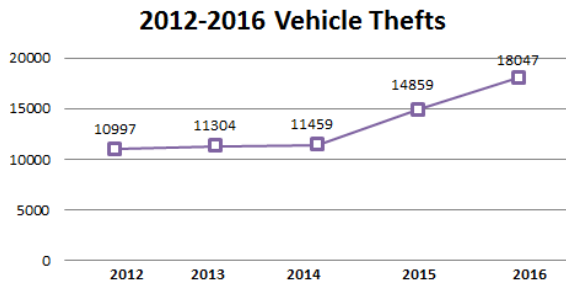
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## General Observations

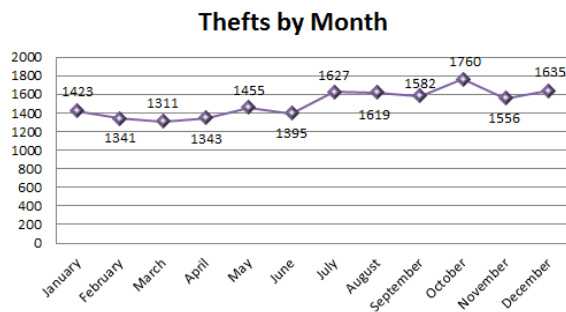
Auto theft has continued on a gradual rise since 2012. In 2016, Colorado experienced a 21.55% increase in auto theft from the previous year; however the percentage of rise slowed about 8%.



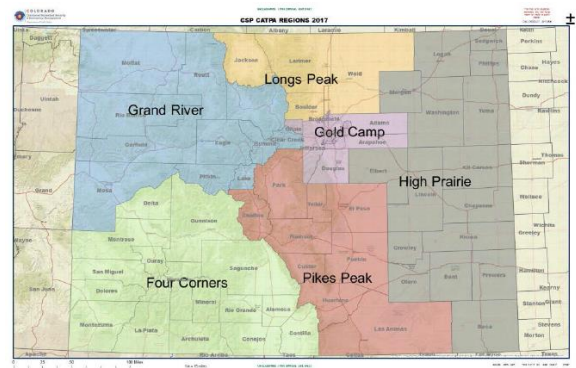
In 2016, there was an average of 1,503 vehicles stolen every month in Colorado. This is a monthly increase of 265 more stolen vehicles per month than experienced in 2015, but again it is a 6.8% decrease over the monthly thefts that were observed in 2015. There was an average of 347 vehicles reported stolen every week within the state, accounting for 49.3 vehicle thefts every day.

Using the F.B.I.'s average value of a motor vehicle reported stolen in 2015 (\$7,001), Colorado experienced \$126,347,047 in vehicle loss while stolen. Compared to 2015 (\$5,972), there was an additional \$37,609,099 of stolen vehicle value in 2016. This value is not considered an economic loss to society, as the only value considered is the average value of the vehicle. If we look at just the amount of vehicles not recovered in 2016, that amount of vehicle loss of use while stolen is \$13,525,932.

In 2016, mid-summer through late winter seemed to have a continual theft pattern, with a couple dips.



The US Census Bureau estimated the population of Colorado in 2016 was 5,540,545.<sup>i</sup> With this in mind, there was an annual average of 325 vehicle thefts per 100,000 people. This is an increase of 51 vehicles per capita compared to 2015, and at the same time a slight decrease that was observed in 2015 from 2014.



In Colorado the state is divided into six different areas pertaining to auto theft and auto theft task forces. The Gold Camp and Pikes Peak areas accounted for an 85.1% majority of reported vehicle thefts.

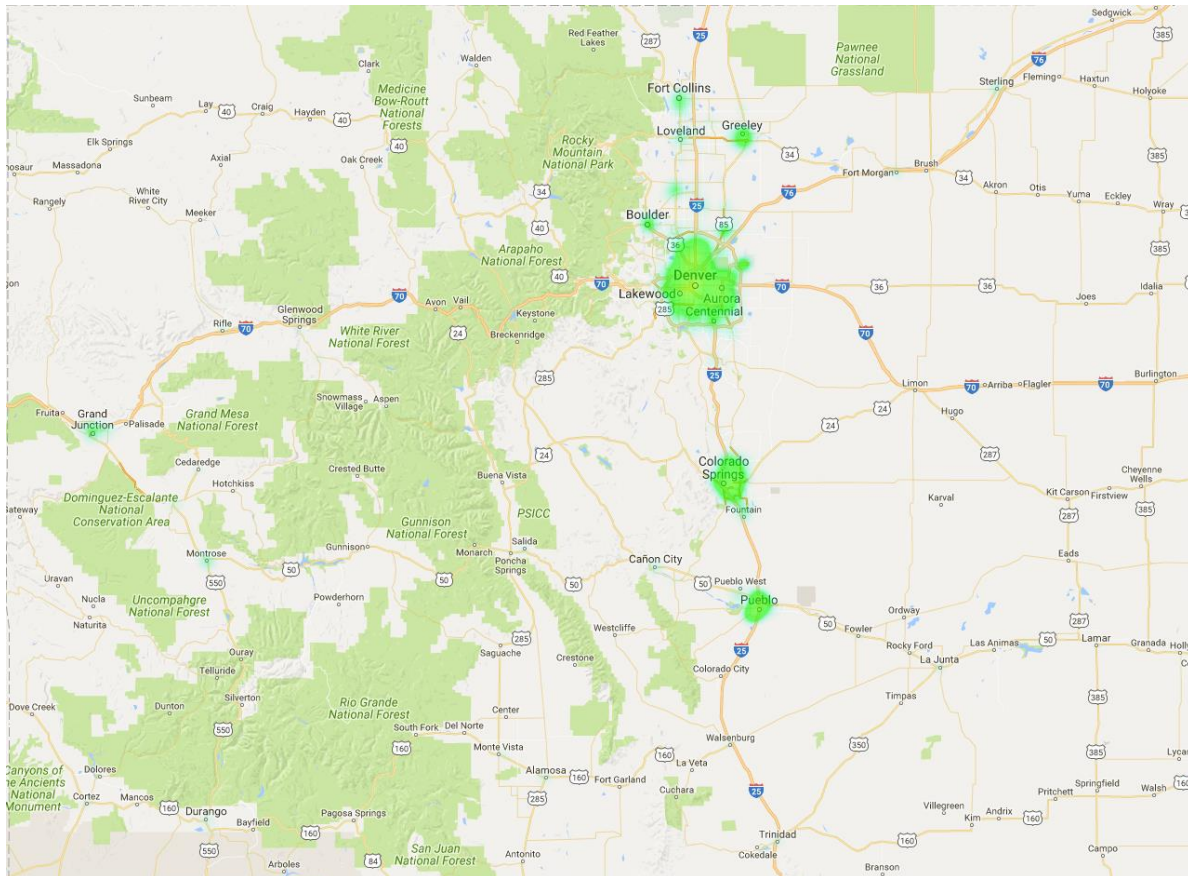
CATPA Area	2013	2014	2015	2016	%Δ
Four Corners	170	254	263	317	20.50%
Gold Camp	7,472	7,441	10,014	11,760	17.40%
Grand River	304	299	405	400	-1%
High Prairie	125	144	157	159	1%
Longs Peak	796	966	1,171	1,504	28.40%
Pikes Peak	2,437	2,349	2,849	3,598	26.30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,304</b>	<b>11,459</b>	<b>14,859</b>	<b>18,047</b>	<b>21.50%</b>

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## Colorado Auto Theft Hot Spots

In 2016 the hot spots for auto theft occurred in and around larger cities. As seen in the heat map below, these include: Boulder, Canon City, Colorado Springs, Denver Metro, Fort Collins, Grand Junction, Greeley, La Junta, Lafayette, Loveland, Montrose, Pueblo, and Sterling.



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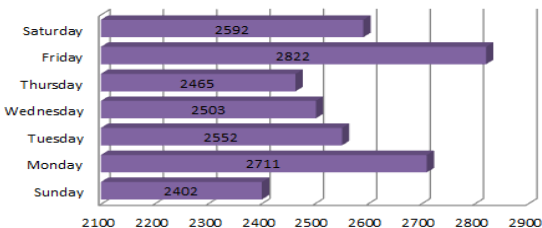
## Statistics

The following reporting agencies reported three or more vehicle thefts per week. These communities accounted for 79% of all reported vehicles thefts in the state. These reporting agencies were located in or around Denver, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Fort Collins, and Greeley.

Reporting Agency	Thefts	Weekly Average
Statewide	18,047	347
Denver	5,064	97
Colorado Springs	2,046	39
Aurora	1,492	29
Pueblo	1,181	23
Lakewood	827	16
Thornton	700	13
Westminster	624	12
Commerce City	443	9
Arvada	406	8
Englewood	362	7
Greeley	328	6
Blank	303	6
Littleton	281	5
Fort Collins	245	5
Northglenn	231	4
Wheat Ridge	212	4
Brighton	192	4

Considering the number of weekdays in 2016, the highest volume of theft days continues to be on Fridays and Mondays.

**Thefts by Day of Week**



Of the 18,047 vehicles stolen during 2016, 86% (15,500) of reported stolen vehicles were deemed "inactive" or otherwise recovered in 2016. The following is a breakdown of the reported stolen vehicles by vehicle type.

Vehicle Styles	Active Thefts	Inactive Thefts	Grand Total Thefts
Bus	0	1	1
Construction/Farm	121	40	161
Moped/Scooter	49	9	58
Motorcycle	576	528	1,104
Passenger Car	413	7,661	8,074
Pickup Truck	283	2,509	2,792
Recreational Vehicle	139	62	201
SUV	227	3,617	3,844
Trailer	664	377	1,041
Tractor Truck	26	80	106
Van	47	614	661
Unknown (Blank)	2	2	4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2,547</b>	<b>15,500</b>	<b>18,047</b>

In 2016 there were 15,500 recovered vehicles where the vehicle was stolen during 2016. Of these vehicles, 60.48% of the vehicles were recovered within one week from the date of theft.

Recovery Delay	Stolen in 2016	Percentage
Same Day Recovery	1,414	9.12%
1 Day to 1 Week	7,961	51.36%
1 Week to 1 Month	3,965	25.59%
1 Month to 3 Months	1,622	10.47%
3 Months to 6 Months	394	2.54%
6 Months to 1 Year	143	0.92%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,500</b>	<b>100%</b>

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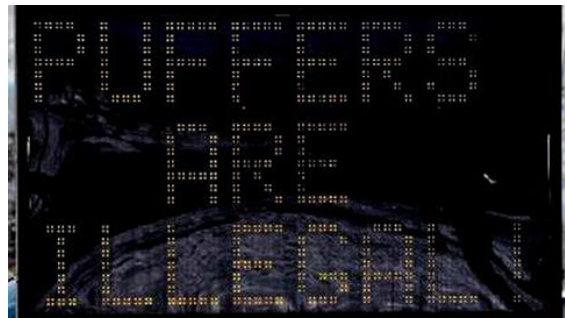


The leading vehicle thefts, by make and model, are the Honda Accord followed by the Honda Civic. These two vehicle models account for 13.8% of all vehicle thefts in 2016, which is a decrease of 2.4% from 2015.

Rank	Make & Model	Class	Thefts
1	Honda Accord	Mid-size Car	1,296
2	Honda Civic	Small Car	1,203
3	Dodge Ram Pickup	Full-size Pickup	359
4	Ford F-250	Full-size Pickup	341
5	Ford F-150	Full-size Pickup	336
6	Jeep Cherokee	Mid-size MPV	329
7	Subaru Impreza	Small Car	313
8	Chevrolet Silverado	Full-size Pickup	305
9	Jeep Grand Cherokee	Mid-size MPV	292
10	Toyota Camry	Mid-size Car	265
11	Ford F-350	Full-size Pickup	236
12	GMC Sierra	Full-size Pickup	209
13	Subaru Legacy	Mid-size Car	204
14	Acura Integra	Small Car	203
15	Ford Explorer	Mid-size MPV	202
16	Toyota Corolla	Small Car	185
17	Nissan Altima	Small Car	165
18	Honda CR-V	Small MPV	151
19	Subaru Outback	Small MPV	137
20	Saturn S Series	Small Car	133

## Puffer Vehicles

The Stolen Vehicle Database Repository was searched for any notation that may lend identification to a vehicle theft where, at the time of theft, the vehicle was unattended and left running. These thefts would be considered “Puffer Thefts” by the Colorado Auto Theft Prevention Authority (CATPA). The database resulted in a total of 199 thefts where a notation was made that the vehicle was a puffer. This is a 25.96% increase over 2015’s 158. In addition, there were 282 vehicle theft records identifying that keys were left in or with the vehicle at the time of the theft. This is a 62.7% reduction over 2015’s 756. These vehicle records attribute to 2.67% of all vehicle thefts in 2016 versus 6.15% in 2015. These numbers do not include victims of vehicle theft who do not report they left their vehicle unattended and running. Additionally, the ATICC database does not require law enforcement reporting of a puffer event.



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## Auto Theft Volume by County

County	Area	2014 Thefts	% Δ '13-'14	2015 Thefts	% Δ '14-'15	2016 Thefts	% Δ '15-'16
Adams County	Gold Camp	2,365	0%	2,428	3%	4,447	83%
Alamosa County	Four Corners	32	78%	27	-16%	27	-
Arapahoe County	Gold Camp	605	1%	1,698	181%	973	-43%
Archuleta County	Four Corners	9	0%	14	56%	3	-27%
Baca County	High Prairie	5	150%	2	-60%	1	-50%
Bent County	High Prairie	9	125%	5	-44%	9	80%
Boulder County	Longs Peak	313	28%	343	10%	398	16%
Broomfield County	Gold Camp	46	2%	85	85%	130	53%
Chaffee County	Pikes Peak	18	20%	21	17%	33	57%
Cheyenne County	High Prairie	1	0%	0	-100%	0	-
Clear Creek County	Grand River	10	11%	15	50%	18	20%
Conejos County	Four Corners	4	-33%	7	75%	5	-29%
Costilla County	Four Corners	9	350%	5	-44%	5	-
Crowley County	High Prairie	5	-44%	5	0%	7	4-%
Custer County	Pikes Peak	7	40%	2	-71%	2	-
Delta County	Four Corners	35	25%	39	11%	51	31%
Denver County	Gold Camp	3,131	-3%	3,922	25%	4,210	7%
Dolores County	Four Corners	2	-	2	0%	3	50%
Douglas County	Gold Camp	192	54%	215	12%	244	13%
Eagle County	Grand River	17	55%	25	47%	24	-4%
El Paso County	Pikes Peak	1,621	-13%	1,749	8%	2,190	25%
Elbert County	Gold Camp	11	10%	9	-18%	13	44%
Fremont County	Pikes Peak	47	34%	63	34%	66	5%
Garfield County	Grand River	43	-7%	60	40%	65	8%
Gilpin County	Gold Camp	14	-26%	7	-50%	15	114%
Grand County	Grand River	5	25%	4	-20%	22	450%
Gunnison County	Four Corners	4	-69%	14	250%	8	-43%
Hinsdale County	Four Corners	0	-	3	0%	0	-100%
Huerfano County	Pikes Peak	6	500%	11	83%	18	64%
Jackson County	Longs Peak	1	0%	1	0%	3	200%
Jefferson County	Gold Camp	1,068	-1%	1,633	53%	1,838	13%
Kiowa County	High Prairie	3	-	2	-33%	1	-50%
Kit Carson County	High Prairie	8	-11%	11	38%	11	-
La Plata County	Four Corners	38	-22%	49	29%	64	31%
Lake County	Grand River	3	200%	7	133%	8	14%
Larimer County	Longs Peak	216	2%	270	25%	390	44%
Las Animas County	Pikes Peak	14	0%	12	-14%	29	142%
Lincoln County	Gold Camp	2	-71%	9	350%	8	-11%

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County	Area	2014 Thefts	% Δ '13-'14	2015 Thefts	% Δ '14-'15	2016 Thefts	% Δ '15-'16
Logan County	High Prairie	30	15%	28	-7%	39	39%
Mesa County	Grand River	174	-4%	168	-3%	227	35%
Mineral County	Four Corners	-	-	-	-	0	-
Moffat County	Grand River	14	-36%	8	-43%	8	-
Montezuma County	Four Corners	19	-17%	34	79%	24	-29%
Montrose County	Four Corners	28	-20%	53	89%	89	68%
Morgan County	High Prairie	27	69%	29	7%	36	24%
Otero County	High Prairie	22	29%	26	18%	34	31%
Ouray County	Four Corners	2	-33%	1	-50%	4	300%
Park County	Pikes Peak	7	-13%	10	43%	16	60%
Phillips County	High Prairie	2	100%	2	0%	1	-50%
Pitkin County	Grand River	7	-13%	3	-57%	15	400%
Prowers County	High Prairie	9	50%	11	22%	10	-9%
Pueblo County	Pikes Peak	493	5%	611	24%	1,228	101%
Rio Blanco County	Grand River	5	0%	3	-40%	1	-67%
Rio Grande County	Four Corners	3	200%	11	267%	19	73%
Routt County	Grand River	12	-37%	12	0%	4	-67%
Saguache County	Four Corners	1	-67%	6	500%	5	-17%
San Juan County	Four Corners	-	-	0	-	0	-
San Miguel County	Four Corners	3	50%	5	67%	2	-60%
Sedgwick County	High Prairie	-	-	-	-	0	-
Summit County	Grand River	19	27%	23	21%	27	17%
Teller County	Pikes Peak	11	0%	17	55%	15	-12%
Unknown		-	-	6	-	182	-
Washington County	High Prairie	1	-80%	4	300%	4	-
Weld County	Longs Peak	335	16%	382	14%	713	87%
Yuma County	High Prairie	10	900%	10	0%	4	-60%
<b>Total</b>		12,004	3%	15,062	25%	18,046	20%

## Auto Theft Victim Impact

Auto theft is considered a property crime; however, stolen vehicles are often used to commit other crimes. Drug use connected with auto theft is very common in Colorado. There is a financial impact on the victim as well as potential danger associated with a recovered stolen vehicle. Victims are encouraged to check their cars for damage, illegal drugs, drug paraphernalia, and other contraband. The victim should carefully vacuum the vehicle and wipe down the interior surfaces with a disinfectant. If the vehicle was stolen with the key and they key was not recovered, a new ignition switch should be installed. Locks on the victim's home, office, and other buildings should be changed if the thief had access to their keys. Garage door codes should be changed and enhanced security measures should be taken at home, since the thief knows where the victim lives.

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## Call to Action

The ATICC along with the CATPA funded Auto Theft Task Forces need to work collaboratively to improve collection and reporting standards of auto theft data.

## Appendix A – Stolen Vehicle Data Validation Processes and Reliability

The Stolen Vehicle Database Repository is the best solution we have to compile a review of statewide auto theft data. It is believed that this data could be significantly more useful with statewide agencies participating to complete the ATICC Supplemental. The ATICC Supplemental is accessed through the Colorado Crime Information Center and enables the ability to collect additional data for a motor vehicle theft event. This supplemental reporting includes additional identifiers related to suspects, modus operandi, victims and the vehicle condition when the vehicle was stolen and when it was recovered. Lastly, ATICC encourages using CCIC stolen vehicle entries compliant with the data standards as outlined in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) /CCIC User's Manual.

### **Process 1: Origination of Data**

Since January 2010, the CATPA has funded a project for the collection, analysis and dissemination of auto theft incidence occurring within Colorado. This project funded the ATICC, operated and managed by the Colorado State Patrol. ATICC was funded to provide reliable, timely, and accurate information/intelligence pertaining to the incidence of auto theft. ATICC has acquired stolen vehicle records for conducting analysis and study of vehicle thefts reported to the Colorado Crime Information Center (CCIC). These stolen vehicle records are classified as law enforcement sensitive and are compliant with the FBI Criminal Justice Information Services Security Policy. ATICC uses the stolen vehicle records, as entered into CCIC, for administrative, strategic and tactical analytical products. In July 2012, ATICC successfully implemented an information technology system to database stolen vehicles reported into CCIC. This database, called the Stolen Vehicle Database Repository (SVDR), affords the ability to capture vehicles that are reported stolen and those that are cleared, located and/or recovered. This report is exclusive to information obtained from the SVDR.

Data used in this report is inclusive of vehicles stolen that are reported to the Colorado Crime Information Center with a date of theft range of January 01, 2016 to December 31, 2016. Stolen vehicles included in this report include vehicles entered into CCIC as a "stolen vehicle" message. The actual number of auto thefts in Colorado is likely higher than reported, as some incidences of auto theft may not be reported to law enforcement, law enforcement agencies may not have entered other stolen vehicles into CCIC due to a stolen vehicle recovery occurring prior to completing the jurisdiction's reporting and processing procedures, and other stolen vehicles may have been reported as a carjacking and/or a felony crime involved stolen vehicle incident. Information contained in the Stolen Vehicle Database Repository is considered dynamic, as modifications, changes and amendments to the stolen vehicle records are made on a daily basis.

### **Process 2: CCIC Data Validation**

Stolen vehicle records entered into CCIC undergo validation standards established by National Crime Information Center and CCIC.

### **Process 3: Data Range**

Stolen vehicles were obtained by a query of the SVDR for thefts occurring from January 01, 2016 through December 31, 2016.

### **Process 4: Deduplication of the 2016 Dataset**

The dataset was reviewed for duplicate records, based on unique record identifier, vehicle identification number, case number, and license plate number, to ensure a single vehicle theft record is not counted more than one time.

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### Process 5: Test Records

The 2016 database was examined to identify “test records”, which were not records of actual stolen vehicles, but records entered as tests in the system. These records were not used in this report.

### Process 6: Identification of Removed Vehicles

Records that were removed during the year were not identified as to why the stolen vehicle was inactive from CCIC. ATICC has identified user errors and misuse of message keys where vehicles are removed from CCIC that may not have been actually “recovered.” However, ATICC does not have the technological advantage to ensure the appropriate message keys to validate the purpose of the inactivation, e.g., cancellation, locate or clear (recovery). Briefly stated, removals from the CCIC database occur from three messages conducted by CCIC authorized users from the Originating Agency who performed the initial entry. These three CCIC message keys are a “clear”, “locate” and “cancel” of the record. The “clear” (CV) and “locate” (LV) message is performed when a vehicle has been located and is subsequently removed from the CCIC/NCIC database. Accordingly, a “clear” is supposed to be performed by the agency that entered the vehicle and then subsequently recovered it. The “locate” is supposed to be performed when an agency, other than the one who originally entered the vehicle into CCIC, has located the vehicle. The “cancel” (XV) record is supposed to be performed when an agency discovers the vehicle was not stolen, yet was originally recorded into CCIC as stolen, and thus needs to be cancelled. Current data processes/practices within the CCIC system treats the CV, LV and XV message the same, regardless of the technical definitions. When reviewing the SVDR records for the purpose of removal from CCIC, it was observed that CCIC Users inappropriately utilize the XV (Cancellation) message key in lieu of the CV (Clear) or LV (Locate). This cause’s additional analytical concern as each XV message key had to be examined as to whether or not the vehicle was truly cancelled or recovered. The process of using a Cancel message key should invoke cases where a previously stolen vehicle entry was discovered not to have been stolen (e.g., joyriding, mistaken vehicle identity, etc.). However, based on law enforcement experience of ATICC personnel, the comparative records of “true” XV messages affecting the overall analysis are minimal. In other words, ATICC believes some of the identified cancellations were a result of stolen vehicles being recovered. In accordance with NCIC policy and law enforcement practice, an official police report of a stolen vehicle must be made prior to the CCIC entry. The result of the aforementioned is that ATICC treated the message keys of “inactive,” “cancel,” “clear,” and “locate” as inactivity in the stolen vehicle database, thus inferring each message key was a recovery.

### Process 7: Identifying Re-Entered Entries

As discussed in last year’s Annual Report, several law enforcement agencies have engaged in a practice to re-enter a stolen vehicle in CCIC/NCIC in order to maintain an alert on the vehicle in the event the vehicle is checked through the system. Qualitative screening involved searching the miscellaneous field for key words and notations, and the stolen vehicle case number indicating re-entry from previous purging.

### Process 8: Normalizing the Dataset

The SVDR populates a list of common terminologies to normalize the dataset, including the common name of the reporting agency, vehicle identifiers based on the vehicle identification number (using VinLink lookup), theft/recovery areas in accordance with the designated CATPA area map, and county assignments based on the assigned CCIC originating reporting agency identifier. As part of using the key indexing charts, many fields of the database underwent cleaning and scrubbing to ensure normalization of key words and terms (e.g., Denver PD vs. Denver vs. Denver City vs. Den vs. Denver CO vs. Denver, CO vs. Denver, Colorado vs. Denver Colorado, etc.).

### Process 9: Cleaning the Dataset with Investigatory Tools

Current CCIC policies do have mandates for a stolen vehicle file to be accepted into the CCIC database, where limited primary fields of information are required. These primary fields of information include, but all are not necessarily required: the date of theft, case number, originating agency identifier number, vehicle make, and vehicle identifier (license plate, vehicle identification number, owner applied number or production number). Unfortunately, for analytical purposes, other key information is not required for entry by the CCIC authorized user. Examples include the

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vehicle model and style. To add further challenges to cleaning the dataset, when key analytical data is entered, it is oftentimes inaccurate due to a lack of data standardization. For example, when the style of the vehicle is entered, it is oftentimes incorrect as the style field does not match the vehicle make and model (i.e., pickups may be entered as passenger cars; SUVs as pickups; scooters as motorcycles, etc.). The most significant value added to the data analysis was information obtained from VinLink®. This tool provided 47 various identifiers for each vehicle possessing a valid VIN entry in the database.

#### **Process 10: Reliability Note**

Based on the above notations, it is obvious the database used to compile this report has limitations and justifies the direction that ATICC is moving in acquiring completion of the ATICC Supplemental. The ATICC Supplemental provides the ability to analyze additional information involving the vehicle theft event and its recovery, such as the suspect information, their location, how a vehicle was stolen (e.g., puffing, forcible entry, etc.), the condition of a vehicle upon recovery, and any associated crimes involving the particular vehicle theft and its recovery. Unfortunately, the dataset is unable to provide valid analysis of these identifiers as few agencies used the ATICC Supplemental within the CCIC stolen vehicle file upon the report of theft and/or the vehicle recovery event.

With regards to the accuracy and reliability of the CCIC data used in this report:

- 1) There is no other uniform statewide reporting system for auto theft other than CCIC stolen vehicle file,
- 2) The CCIC entries were not intended to provide a records management system for analysis of auto theft,
- 3) There is established criteria and validation of entries made into the SVDR that many individual law enforcement records management systems do not possess (e.g., VinLink, CJIS validation standards, etc.) and
- 4) It is recommended to keep in mind the actual numbers are likely higher than portrayed, but it is believed this report provides the best picture of auto theft experienced in Colorado.

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<sup>i</sup> Colorado <http://www.census.gov/search-results.html?q=colorado&page=1&stateGeo=none&searchtype=web&cssp=SERP&search.x=0&search.y=0>

Accessed 13 February 2017

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