

To the Honorable Governor Edward G. Rendell and Members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly:

Each year, I provide a snapshot of our successes—a year's accomplishments edited down to the headlines and highlights of our work reducing auto theft. This year, I am proud to report that we once again have marquee-worthy headlines, but I am equally enthused to share with you a more intimate look into the subplots of combating and preventing auto theft in Pennsylvania.

The Authority plays a supporting role. We foster an environment in which our grantees can cooperate, communicate and investigate auto theft more effectively. Combating auto theft is not a one-person show; it's an ensemble of law enforcement professionals, technology providers, administrators and directors who orchestrate programs to stay one step ahead of thieves and encourage the public to protect its vehicles.

Our cast of characters is extensive, but none deserve the spotlight more than our grantees—the law enforcement men and women whose performances have led to yet another record-setting year. In 2008, 22,476 vehicles were stolen*; our grantees arrested 1,281 individuals and had 629 convictions. In addition, they assisted in the arrest of 590 offenders. Their investigative efforts led to the recovery of \$34.5 million worth of stolen vehicles and parts. These achievements alone are worthy of applause. To our partners in the insurance industry, our success is more than a great performance; it is demonstration of a significant return on their investment. For every dollar spent on law enforcement grants this year, the Authority realized a return on investment of \$7.15 in vehicles and parts recovered.

Our comprehensive training program includes in-class instruction open to all Pennsylvania law enforcement agencies. The courses range from basic vehicle identification to specialized lectures on tractor-trailer, motorcycle and heavy equipment theft. We also offer an annual training conference for our grantees and instructional DVDs to reinforce best practices regarding law enforcement and current trends in vehicle theft. This year, our grantees also participated in the northeast regional convergence of the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators. Law enforcement professionals from Pennsylvania, our neighboring states and Canada met in Scranton to share information and attend training sessions.

It is no surprise that when owners take steps to protect their vehicles, they are playing a crucial role in preventing a potential theft. With that in mind, we have assembled a roster of partners to help educate drivers. The Philadelphia Eagles, for example, are passionate about keeping their fans safe, and they have once again given us a stage from which to broadcast our message. Together, we launched the Lock, Block & Win Sweepstakes to encourage drivers to take an active role in preventing vehicle theft in the southeast region of Pennsylvania, where nearly 50% of the state's thefts occur. The contest rewarded fans by giving them the chance to win great Eagles and anti-auto-theft related prizes for learning to protect their vehicles.

The Authority's focused and efficient coordination of legislative efforts, law enforcement and prevention programs has lowered auto theft in Pennsylvania. But the fight is not over. Like the plot twists of suspense thrillers and crime dramas, the tides of criminal malice can change in an instant. Eroding economic conditions are demoralizing to the public, but invigorating to criminals. Now, more than ever, our efforts will be tested.

Together, we will continue our mission to efficiently and effectively reduce and prevent auto theft in Pennsylvania.

Respectfully,


Julia K. Hearthway, Chair
Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority

A MOTIVATED COALITION

* Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Definition: Motor vehicle theft is the illegal taking of a motor vehicle, or driving the vehicle without the owner's consent. Attempted motor vehicle thefts are included. Includes theft of motor-driven vehicles, such as autos, trucks, buses, motorcycles, motor scooters and snowmobiles. Data finalized for publication on 02/25/09. UCR numbers are subject to continual edit and not complete until the UCR Annual Report is compiled. The 2008 UCR Annual Report is expected October 2009.