

# EXPERTS IN ACTION

One of the most important tools used to reduce vehicle theft is training. In 2008, the Authority educated 659 Pennsylvania law enforcement officers through its auto theft identification and investigation courses. The Authority's curriculum includes a series of six training courses, which are offered free to Pennsylvania law enforcement agencies. Each program lasts two to four hours and is targeted to the professional police officer. The instructor, Joseph Datesman, is a retired Pennsylvania State Police Lieutenant who spent 33 years of his career investigating and training other investigators on vehicle theft and related subjects.

Auto Theft 101 is designed to teach patrol officers what to look for during traffic stops and update them on laws concerning auto-theft-related crime. The course also includes information about VIN numbers, titles and license plates, as well as methods of theft.

Auto Theft 102 was developed for officers who will be participating in stolen vehicle investigations. The course addresses vehicle identification and methods used to alter VINs.

Auto Theft 103 focuses on identifying all-terrain vehicles. Auto Theft 104 addresses motorcycle identification. Auto Theft 105 discusses heavy equipment identification. Auto Theft 106 teaches officers how to identify trucks, tractors and semi-trailers.

The Authority also hosts an annual training conference. The conference is open to all grantees and features special seminars designed to provide law enforcement with training beyond what is offered through the Authority's standard curriculum. This year, the conference attendees learned advanced interrogation techniques from a criminal investigation specialist.

Many of the Authority's grantees also participated in the 36th annual International Association of Auto Theft Investigator's (IAATI) Northeast Training Seminar. The conference was held in Scranton and featured training topics ranging from vehicle and motorcycle identification to forensic locksmith analysis.

Beyond these programs, the Authority also partnered with the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association and conducted specialized training regarding owner give-ups at the Association's annual member conference held in Lancaster. Michelle Staton, Executive Director of the Authority, made a presentation on owner give-ups/false reporting of stolen vehicles. An owner give-up can occur when a vehicle owner can no longer afford payments due to loss of job or a change in their economic status. They can also occur when lessees are near the end of their lease and/or cannot afford pricey mileage overages. Some drivers even exchange their vehicles for drugs.

As economic conditions continue to deteriorate, law enforcement agencies across the state and insurance companies should be on the look out for owner give-ups. The Authority offers DVDs, free-of-charge, designed to educate law enforcement professionals and insurance company special investigative units on how to detect this type of auto-related crime.

Auto Thefts by County

