

2007 Vehicle Theft Award of Merit

Category 1 (1-250 Officers) Winner: Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, Police Department, of which Warren S. Gall is the Chief

The Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, Police Department combined interaction and training, along with aggressive enforcement, to reduce the incidence of motorcycle theft, especially during the Harley-Davidson Spring and Fall Rallies (in May and October) when about 43 percent of the vehicles stolen were motorcycles and during the Memorial [Day] Weekend Motorcycle Rally.

- Street Crimes Unit officers initially met with the City's motorcycle businesses and enthusiasts, its Chamber of Commerce, and the Myrtle Beach Hospitality Association to seek input and to identify concerns. They next met with members of the Uniform Patrol and Investigative Divisions, as well as of the Records and Training Units, to gain police employees' perspective.
- The Street Crimes Unit enlisted the support of an existing law enforcement network (South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, Georgetown County Sheriff's Office, Horry County Police Department, and six municipal police agencies) that had held monthly meetings to discuss enforcement strategies and to exchange intelligence. It also sought training and advice from organizations having greater expertise in this realm: Connecticut State Police; Florida Highway Patrol; National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB); and Volusia County, Florida, Sheriff's Office. Manpower also was requested.
- The Street Crimes Unit, in conjunction with the Connecticut State Police and NICB, provided more than 100 police officers with training designed to heighten their awareness and to increase their knowledge of proper motorcycle identification, cloned VINs, detecting fictitious VINs, and intelligence-gathering.
- The LoJack Corporation provided training concerning its theft-reduction system and appropriately equipped several police vehicles.
- GEICO and NICB underwrote the cost of printing 10,000 motorcycle theft prevention brochures, which were distributed to businesses, citizens, and motels prior to—and during—the rallies.
- Street Crimes Unit officers met with private security officers at motels and other locations where they had been hired to ensure awareness of the problem and the specific efforts to attack it and to maintain open lines of communication.
- Between four and eight teams of officers, theft investigators, and NICB agents were established during the rallies. Officers concentrated on areas where previous thefts had occurred, conducting walk-throughs and completing assessments.

In 2005, the program recovered twelve stolen motorcycles during the Harley-Davidson Spring Rally, 24 during the Memorial Weekend Motorcycle Rally, and three during the Harley-Davidson Fall Rally. Their total value was \$342,000.00.

In 2006, this effort recovered 16 stolen motorcycles and one backhoe during the Harley-Davidson Spring Rally, 38 motorcycles during the Memorial Weekend Motorcycle Rally, and five during the Harley-Davidson Fall Rally. Their total value was \$875,000.00.

Category 2 (251-1,000 Officers) Winner: Surrey Royal Canadian Mounted Police's Auto and Property Crimes Target Teams, of which Chief Superintendent Fraser MacRae is the Officer-in-Charge

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is contracted to provide law enforcement services to the city of Surrey, which has a population of 400,000, making it the tenth largest city in Canada and the second largest city in British Columbia. In 2003, the Surrey RCMP received 8,105 reports of stolen vehicles, which afforded Surrey the distinction of having the highest per capita vehicle theft rate in Canada.

The Surrey RCMP Auto Crime Target Team is a proactive, independent, full-time, self-contained targeting and surveillance unit staffed by 7 constables and a supervisor. Among its programs and strategies:

- Hiring a dedicated mapping analyst to identify hot spots, trends, and more efficient deployment of Auto Crime Target Team members
- Developing a comprehensive template enumerating all factors that need to be considered to ensure repeat offenders are denied bail, pending trial. More than 80 percent of the offenders whose cases were filed in 2006, were held without bond.
- Closely monitoring offenders throughout the entire criminal justice process and ensuring appearances are made as scheduled, bail conditions are met, and recidivists obtain meaningful sentences
- Assigning a dedicated prosecutor to the Auto Crime Target Team
- Revising patrol-officer training to emphasize apprehension of offenders in occupied stolen vehicles in non-pursuit environments
- Partnering with the Surrey Crime Prevention Society to increase the quality of communication
- Increasing training of Auto Crime Target Team members in recruiting, developing, and handling confidential informants
- Acquiring global positioning system (GPS) tracking devices to be installed on unoccupied stolen vehicles which are likely to be used again by perpetrator(s)
- Revising procedures by which fingerprints are collected, promptly entering latent lifts into a database, and tying together—and targeting

the Auto Crime Target Team's efforts on—multiple cases committed by a single offender

- Increasing effectiveness by partnering with British Columbia's Integrated Municipal Provincial Auto Crime Team (IMPACT) and with the Surrey RCMP's Property Crime Target Team and initiating combined briefings, intelligence sharing, and joint operations

The Auto Crime Target Team arrested during 2006, 123 offenders, the majority of whom had been caught in the act of stealing or operating stolen vehicles and 97 of whom already have been convicted. Moreover, none of these cases involved motor vehicle crashes, property damage, or injury either to police officers or to third parties. Finally, vehicle thefts in Surrey decreased 22 percent in 2006 over 2005.

Category 3 (1,001+ Officers) Winner: Florida Highway Patrol, of which Colonel Christopher A. Knight is the Director

The Florida Highway Patrol and allied agencies have realized that the commercial vehicle and cargo theft problem is far too large to be solved by any one law enforcement agency, e.g., in one recent year Florida recorded 381 cargo thefts with an estimated total loss of \$34.4 million. They understand that the very nature of the trucking industry contributes to the problem: drivers' personal and mandated downtime; high-value cargoes with minimal or no security; speed with which un-tethered trailers can be stolen; and nominal punishment imposed upon accused, if apprehended and convicted. They also grasp the disconnect between law enforcement and the trucking industry, e.g., not always sharing intelligence, not responding to the location of a stolen trailer's recovery because of the physical distance involved, and not partnering with each other because a trucking company often is located well outside an agency's jurisdiction.

- The Highway Patrol's Bureau of Investigations personnel received training in cargo-theft reduction, including the use of an Electronic Freight Theft Management System (EFTMS) to share in a timely manner information relating to thefts of commercial vehicles; cargo-theft trends; and techniques used by thieves. Those personnel, in turn, attended numerous trucking industry conferences throughout the United States, met with Florida law enforcement officers at every level, and shared their expertise; all were invited to participate in EFTMS.
- The Highway Patrol has focused on the timeframe between the location of the theft and the location where the stolen item is intended to be transported, i.e., the period of time when the thief is most vulnerable to apprehension.
- The Highway Patrol, in conjunction with agencies in areas where high numbers of thefts occurred, began placing decoys equipped with satellite tracking technology, so the decoys could be tracked to their

destinations to identify and apprehend perpetrators, to recover additional stolen property, and to secure leads in order to pursue other cases. This effort evolved into the Florida Commercial Vehicle Cargo Theft Task Force, comprised of many Florida law enforcement agencies and the NICB and led by the Highway Patrol.

Operation Sand Storm in April 2006, recovered two stolen—and one abandoned—vehicles, as well as a piece of heavy equipment, having a total value of \$83,850.00. It effected nine felony—and 28 misdemeanor—arrests and issued 106 infractions, 13 faulty equipment notices, and 157 warnings.

Operations, such as this one, displace thefts, as evidenced by the recovery in Florida of a \$1.5 million load of cargo stolen from Georgia. Consequently, the Florida Highway Patrol provided assistance and training to the Georgia State Patrol and other Georgia enforcement agencies and conducted in September 2006, a joint operation in Georgia.

The Florida Highway Patrol's efforts have reduced commercial-vehicle theft losses by more than half. The Highway Patrol pledges to continue and expand those efforts in conjunction with its current partners.

Category 4 (Multi-agency task forces) Winner: Integrated Municipal Provincial Auto Crime Team (IMPACT), of which Inspector Wayne Holland is the Officer-in-Charge

The Integrated Municipal Provincial Auto Crime Team (IMPACT) was formed in 2002, "to develop strategies to reduce auto crime" via priorities, objectives, and goals established by its governing board which is comprised of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia, and the British Columbia Association of Chiefs of Police. Program highlights include:

- IMPACT successfully introduced to Canada in 2002, global positioning system (GPS) technology to track covertly, stolen vehicles and has provided this equipment, along with technical assistance and training, to other law enforcement agencies.
- High-crime areas are patrolled to locate stolen vehicles on which GPS tracking devices may be installed or where bait vehicles can be deployed. Canine units, as well as air support, provide assistance during these operations.
- As soon as high-crime areas and recidivists are identified, officers conduct surveillance in those areas and on those offenders and effect arrests.
- IMPACT inaugurated in 2004, the Lower Mainland Bait Car Program and has expanded it to all of British Columbia, making it the largest

and most successful program of its kind in the world. The extensive media coverage that this program has received—along with its Web site, www.baitcar.com, which receives 30,000 “hits” per month worldwide—has created the illusion that “bait cars are everywhere.”

- IMPACT currently began testing in 2006, an automatic license plate recognition (ALPR) system.
- Whether or not criminal charges are filed, the “No Free Ride” project initiates civil proceedings against auto thieves and their accomplices, e.g., their passengers. Judgments remain in effect for 20 years, and those who default are denied driver’s licenses, vehicle registrations, and personal liability insurance. It currently is being tested in two jurisdictions and, if successful, it will be expanded to the entire province.
- IMPACT is completing production on *Stolen Lives*, a graphic deterrent to auto-theft CD intended for high school audiences.
- IMPACT launched in February 2006, the first “Auto Crime Enforcement Month” in British Columbia, accompanied by the “Top Ten Most Wanted” vehicle crime offenders. Other “Top Ten” lists relative to auto-theft characteristics were developed for public distribution.
- Auto-theft liaison officers were afforded one day’s training prior to “Auto Crime Enforcement Month” and were provided with the CD *Auto Theft Toolbox* to enhance officers’ ability to investigate, arrest, and prosecute car thieves. Additionally, volunteer groups patrolled parking lots attempting to locate stolen vehicles.

IMPACT’s programs and initiatives yielded in British Columbia an estimated 4,700 less stolen vehicles in 2006 than in 2005, at an estimated savings of \$19 million; a 19 percent decrease in auto theft; and a 13 percent decrease in vehicle break-in claims.