



**Motor Vehicle Theft
and Insurance Fraud
Prevention Board**

2020 Annual Report

New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services
80 South Swan Street, Albany, New York 12210

www.criminaljustice.ny.gov

**New York State
Motor Vehicle and Insurance Fraud Prevention Board
2020 Annual Report**

This report is submitted by the Board as required by Section 846-L(3)(h) of the New York State Executive Law. The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services provides staff support to the Board.

Issued December 2021 (*Updated October 2022*)

Kathy Hochul
Governor
State of New York

Rossana Rosado
Commissioner
New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

**New York State Motor Vehicle Theft and
Insurance Fraud Prevention
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Executive Deputy Commissioner
New York State Division of Criminal Justice
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Regional Director–Northeast Region
National Insurance Crime Bureau

Edmund Golat

Progressive Insurance

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James Potts

New York Central Mutual Fire Insurance
Company

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(DCJS)
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and Funding**

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Deputy Commissioner

Yvonne J. Turner

Director

Ronda N. Ross

*Deputy Director of State Supported Grants and
Programs*

**Law Enforcement and Legal
Services Unit**

David Martin

Program Manager

Jason Tillou

MVTIFP Program Representative

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I. Introduction

Motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud have a substantial impact on insurance rates in New York State and across the country. These crimes are highly sophisticated and cost law-abiding motor vehicle owners and insurance policy holders hundreds of millions of dollars in increased business expenses and significantly higher annual insurance rates.

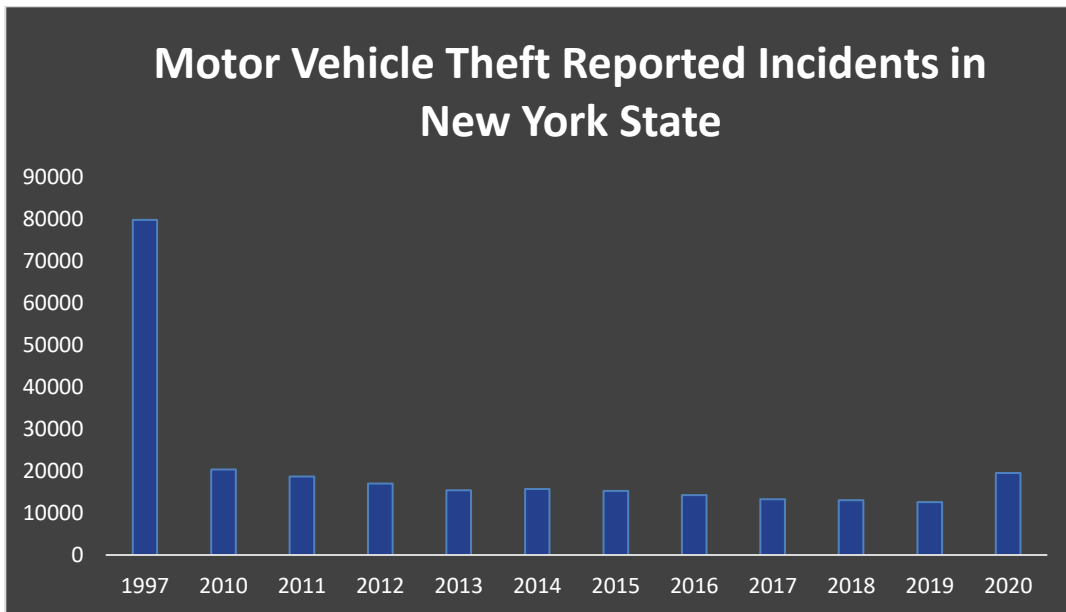
The *New York Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Program* (MVTIFP) is designed to reduce the overall cost of motor vehicle insurance in the state by targeting theft and fraud and is funded by a statutorily required fee assessed on each motor vehicle insurance policy issued in New York State. The 2019-2020 state budget appropriated \$3.7 million for the program, which was used to support grants to law enforcement agencies and other entities to combat theft and fraud during the calendar year 2020, which are detailed in this report.

A 12-member *Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Board* (board), which includes representatives of law enforcement, consumers of motor vehicle insurance, insurance carriers and relevant state agency representatives who are appointed by the Governor, is responsible for overseeing the program. The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) provides staff support to the board and the program's participating agencies.

A. Motor Vehicle Theft

Great strides have been made in reducing motor vehicle theft in New York. From 1997 through 2019, reported thefts decreased 84 percent. In 2020, however, there was a dramatic increase in vehicles reported stolen: 19,520, representing a 55 percent increase from the 12,573 reported stolen in 2019. This represents the first year with a significant increase in motor vehicle theft since the inception of the program in 1994 and the increase exceeds the 11 percent increase in reported thefts nationwide, according to data from the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB). Despite the increase in thefts, New York continues to have one of the lowest rates of theft by population in the nation, ranking 46th of 52 states and territories in 2020. While statewide theft numbers are typically driven by those occurring in New York City, NICB data indicated that the New York City Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) ranks 291st of 390 MSAs measured.

According to the NICB, the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic downturn likely contributed to the increase, as did other factors, including vehicles being used less frequently and owners not taking proper precautions to secure vehicles.



Motor Vehicle Theft 2019 vs. 2020 Top Ten Counties			
County	2019	2020	% Change
Kings	1,833	2,943	60.6
Queens	1,561	2,544	63.0
Bronx	1,267	2,130	68.1
Erie	1,029	1,955	90.0
New York	682	1,395	104.5
Monroe	964	1,304	35.3
Suffolk	835	1,264	51.4
Onondaga	782	928	18.7
Westchester	468	741	58.3
Nassau	639	702	9.9

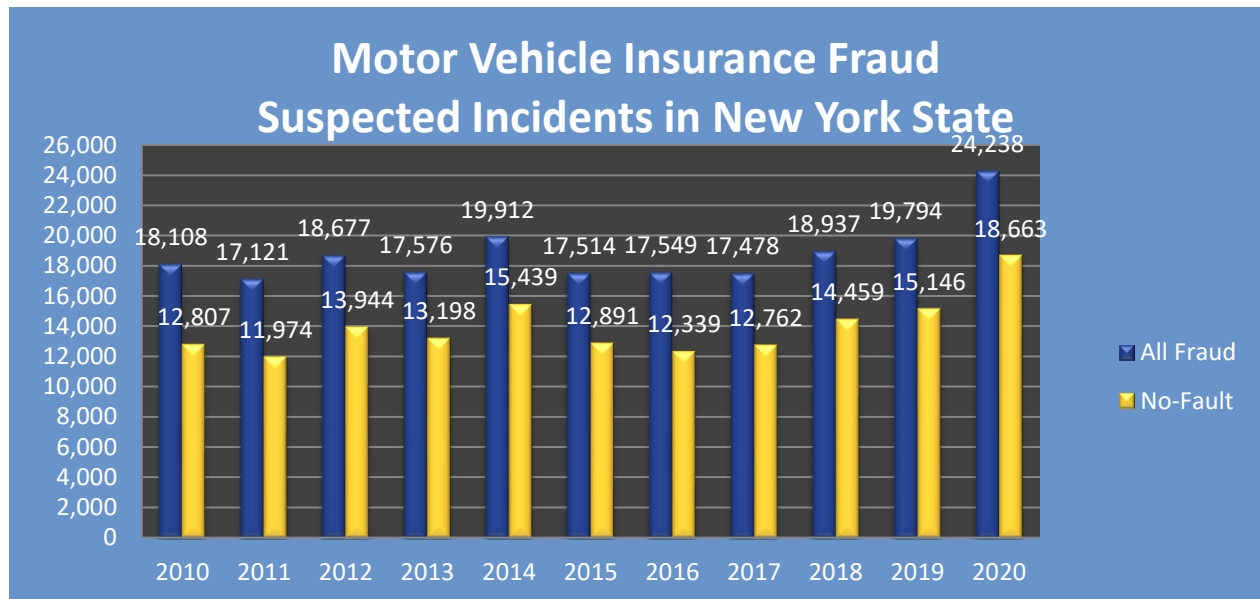
While much of the motor vehicle theft continues to occur in the New York City region, six non-New York City counties – Erie, Monroe, Nassau, Onondaga, Suffolk and Westchester – rank among the top 10 counties for reported motor vehicle thefts. All of the top 10 counties experienced significant increases in reported vehicle thefts in 2020. Statewide, 49 of the 62 counties saw increased thefts, while five counties remained at the same levels and eight counties recorded decreases.

B. Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud

New York State drivers are statutorily required to have automobile insurance that includes coverage for the following:

- **No-Fault Personal Injury Protection:** To pay medical expenses, lost earnings and other reasonable and necessary expenses for a driver or passenger injured in, or a pedestrian injured by, their vehicles.

- **Liability:** To protect against the harm their vehicles – or any vehicle they drive with the owner’s permission – might do to other people and their property.
- **Uninsured Motorists:** To protect against the injuries that they, their family or their passengers might suffer in a hit-and-run accident or in an accident with an uninsured vehicle.



Insurance carriers reported 24,238 incidents of suspected motor vehicle insurance fraud to the New York State Department of Financial Services (DFS) Insurance Frauds Bureau in 2020, including no-fault, motor vehicle theft, motor vehicle arson, larceny from motor vehicles, motor vehicle vandalism, motor vehicle collision damage, falsified motor vehicle invoices and fraudulent motor vehicle insurance cards. This represents an all-time high in incidents of suspected motor vehicle insurance fraud, and an increase of approximately 23 percent from levels reported in 2019.

No-fault motor vehicle insurance fraud typically accounts for more than half of all reports of insurance fraud and three-quarters of reports of motor vehicle insurance fraud reports. In 2020, no-fault fraud accounted for approximately 77 percent of all suspected incidents of motor vehicle insurance fraud reported. No-fault insurance fraud reports increased by approximately 23 percent, from 15,146 in 2019 to 18,663 in 2020.

II. Program Goals

The goal of the MVTIFP is to provide an integrated means to prevent, deter and reduce the incidence of motor vehicle theft and motor vehicle insurance fraud. The program provides funding for initiatives that include theft and fraud prevention education and the establishment and maintenance of specialized law enforcement units to combat motor vehicle theft and motor vehicle insurance fraud. Eligible applicants for funding include local law enforcement agencies and not-for-profit organizations that administer one or more motor vehicle theft or insurance fraud prevention programs or driver safety programs conforming to a plan approved by the board.

As required by Executive Law Article 36-A, statewide Motor Vehicle Theft and Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Plans of Operation are updated periodically on recommendations from the board. These separate

plans of operation include assessing the scope of motor vehicle theft and motor vehicle insurance fraud problems, including a regional analysis of motor vehicle theft and/or motor vehicle insurance fraud incidents and related activities, and analyses of various methods of combating problems associated with motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud.

Both plans of operation are available under [Annual Reports and Publications](#) and provide guidance on the types of projects supported by program funding.

III. Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Board

The MVTIFP is administered by a 12-member Board with the DCJS commissioner or designee serving as its chair. All board members are appointed by the governor: three are recommended by the speaker of the New York State Assembly, three by the temporary president of the New York State Senate, and the remaining five by the governor. Members serve four-year terms and are not considered public officials. The board includes representatives of consumers of motor vehicle insurance, motor vehicle insurance companies, law enforcement agencies and the judicial system.

The board is charged with developing and recommending coordinated plans of operation that provide for the statewide reduction of motor vehicle theft and motor vehicle insurance fraud. Elements of the plans must include:

- Assessments of the magnitude and scope of the problems, including an analysis of theft and fraud by region;
- Methods for combating the problems;
- Information relevant to the development of competitive request for proposals (RFPs) to fund local programs to combat both problems.

Pursuant to the recommendations of the board, Executive Law Article 36-A authorizes the DCJS Commissioner to:

- Execute contracts;
- Accept grants and other contributions;
- Make grants through an RFP process;
- Appoint employees and affix compensation;
- Request assistance and information from the New York State Police, police departments throughout the state, DFS, state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), state Office of Court Administration, any New York state agency or from any insurer;
- Assist municipalities in the development of local programs;
- Advise and assist the superintendent of Insurance pursuant to Insurance Law §2348 (this section now requires that rate filings reflect insurers' savings resulting from the program);
- Annually submit to the governor and chairs of the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means committees a report on the board's activities, the activities of grant recipients and the results or impact of those activities.

A. Board Activity

A lack of quorum due to several unfilled vacancies and complications related to the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the board from meeting.

B. Programs Funded by The Board for Calendar Year 2021

In 2020, renewal grants were issued in the following award amounts for calendar year 2021:

New York City	Award
Bronx County District Attorney	\$329,991
Kings County District Attorney	\$250,873
New York County District Attorney	\$263,445
Queens County District Attorney	\$560,625
Richmond County District Attorney	\$50,144
NYPD Auto Crime Division	\$199,000
NYPD Fraudulent Collision Investigation Squad	\$100,000
NYPD Auto Larceny Fraud Investigation Unit	\$24,873
Fire Department of New York City (FDNY)	\$124,800
New York City Suburban Region	Award
Nassau County District Attorney	\$114,300
Nassau County Police Department	\$145,869
Suffolk County District Attorney	\$283,210
Suffolk County Police Department	\$123,556
Westchester County District Attorney	\$277,963
Yonkers City Police Department	\$122,414
Capital Region / Hudson Valley	Award
Albany City Police Department	\$33,000
Albany County District Attorney	\$65,050
Western Region	Award
Buffalo City Police Department	\$106,884
Cheektowaga Town Police Department	\$36,542
Erie County District Attorney	\$104,758
Niagara County District Attorney	\$109,443
Niagara County Sheriff Department	\$20,000
Niagara Falls City Police Department	\$23,400
Finger Lakes Region	Award
Monroe County District Attorney	\$87,000
Monroe County Sheriff Office	\$36,500
Rochester City Police Department	\$49,520
Statewide	Award
New York Anti-Car Theft and Fraud Association, Inc.	\$65,100
New York Prosecutors Training Institute, Inc.	\$40,740

IV. 2020 Grant Program Descriptions

New York City Region

Bronx County District Attorney's Office
 Kings County District Attorney's Office
 New York County District Attorney's Office
 Queens County District Attorney's Office
 Richmond County District Attorney's Office
 NYPD Auto Crime Division,
 Fraudulent Collision Investigation Squad, and Patrol Borough
 Queens South Auto Larceny Fraud Investigations Unit
 Fire Department of New York

Bronx County District Attorney's Office

The Bronx District Attorney's Office Anti-Auto Theft Unit received a grant of \$329,991 for 2020, which partially funded salaries of six assistant district attorneys, four investigators and a forensic accountant. The Anti-Auto Theft program aims to increase the number of successful prosecutions of defendants charged with grand larceny of a motor vehicle, criminal possession of stolen property, motor vehicle fraud, auto stripping and/or unauthorized use of vehicles, and insurance fraud.

The Bronx District Attorney's Office owns several bait cars and a surveillance van used to enhance undercover operations. Working jointly with police precincts throughout Bronx County that have experienced an increase in car theft, the bait cars are positioned in high crime areas with plainclothes police officers stationed nearby. In 2020, prosecutors worked with Bronx precincts to conduct bait car operations and to use a license plate reader to supplement investigations. Joint operations between the NYPD and the district attorney's Auto Crime Unit led to the recovery of 126 vehicles in 2020, valued at approximately \$2,774,155. The NYPD reported a 67 percent increase in reported grand theft auto larcenies in Bronx County in 2020.

The office utilizes a vertical prosecution model for vehicle theft and fraud cases. Prosecutors are involved in cases from the earliest stages, working with detectives to review, draft and present search warrant applications and seek cooperation from defendants after arrest.

Investigators and assistant prosecutors at the Bronx District Attorney's Office have maintained relationships and communications with collaborating partners in the fields of auto theft and insurance fraud. In 2020, investigators and prosecutors conferred with the following partner agencies: NICB, the New York City Auto Crime Squad, Auto Larceny Unit and NYPD precinct commands, adjacent and remote local police commands, the New York State Police, DFS, other prosecutors' offices, both inside and outside of New York State DMV, and special investigations units of major motor vehicle insurance carriers.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	87	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	16
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	2	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	29
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	360	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF cases	\$0

Kings County District Attorney's Office

The Kings County District Attorney's Office received a \$250,873 grant in 2020, paying for part of the salaries of five assistant prosecutors, two senior prosecutors, one detective investigator and one deputy bureau chief, in addition to necessary training on advances in the field. Motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases are primarily handled by the Trial Division Zones, while the Investigations Division focuses on long-term investigations.

An updated program description was not available at the time this report was completed.

New York County District Attorney's Office

The New York County (Manhattan) District Attorney's Office received a \$263,445 grant in 2020, funding three part-time assistant district attorneys, an analyst and a paralegal. This bolsters the district attorney's ability to investigate and prosecute crimes, such as motor vehicle theft, unlicensed operation of motor vehicles, automobile-part theft rings, fraudulent insurance broker schemes, and combat the production, possession, and use of counterfeit auto insurance and other motor vehicle-related documents. Significantly, over the last five years, the program has helped fund a major investigation into the tow truck industry.

As a result of long-term court closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant reduction in the number of prosecutions for motor vehicle theft and fraud offenses. However, members of the Rackets Bureau continued to conduct long-term investigations into sophisticated criminal schemes pertaining to motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud.

Throughout 2020, grant-funded attorneys continued to investigate the tow truck industry and build criminal cases against numerous defendants, as they have in prior years, with a new focus on auto body shops that work in concert with towing companies to artificially inflate insurance claims. The investigation of this portion of the towing / repair industry is ongoing.

In addition to the tow truck investigation, the Rackets Bureau conducted other investigations into motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud-related offenses. The first investigation pertains to a staged-accident ring involving pedestrians, often using fake or stolen identities, claiming to have been injured as a result of being struck by vehicles. The other investigation involves individuals claiming to have been injured as a result of a motor vehicle accident, but evidence suggests that either the collision never occurred, or the individuals were not present at the time of the collision. Both of these investigations are ongoing and had not resulted in indictments by the end of 2020.

As a result of long-term court closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant reduction in the number of prosecutions for motor vehicle theft and fraud offenses. However, attorneys in the Trials Bureau continue to investigate and prosecute cases of vehicle theft, including several cases involving violence.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	13	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	5
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	4	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	6
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	3	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF cases	\$0

Queens County District Attorney's Office

The Queens County District Attorney's Office received a \$560,625 grant in 2020, paying for three full-time assistant district attorneys, one supervisor and three full-time investigators assigned to the Specialized Auto Crime and Insurance Fraud Unit. This unit is comprised of attorneys, investigators, and paralegals with special expertise in auto theft and insurance fraud. The unit focuses on long-term investigations and the handling of specially selected cases for trial and targets organized auto theft and insurance fraud activity. A major emphasis is placed on building enterprise corruption cases to ensure that the foundations of criminal activity are uprooted and to aggressively pursue individual prosecution and obtain maximum sentencing.

The District Attorney's Office continued its strategy of combating auto crimes and insurance fraud through long-term investigative activity and targeting cases for specialized handling with strict dispositions and sentencing. This approach involves strong partnerships and coordinated efforts with local, state, and federal law enforcement, prosecutors, governmental agencies, and the insurance industry. Important components of the strategy include assignment of dedicated staff to enhanced investigative and prosecutorial initiatives, as well as the review and targeting of cases for strict dispositions and sentencing. Intensive investigative activity, including sting operations, development of confidential informants, surveillance and electronic eavesdropping, is utilized. Other important components of the strategy include vertical prosecutions, intelligence gathering and sharing, crime analysis and the use of state-of-the-art technology.

The following examples highlight some of the successful investigative and prosecutorial efforts in 2020: As a result of one investigation, an individual was charged with grand larceny, identity theft, and other crimes, for allegedly using fake identification to buy or lease several luxury vehicles in other people's names. One of the victims in the case was the defendant's terminally ill uncle. Charges remain pending in this case.

Another investigation involved a defendant who allegedly set fire to his own tractor truck while it sat in a tow company's lot after having been impounded. The fire burned several other vehicles and a building, in addition to the defendant's truck, resulting in over \$100,000 in damages. The defendant was charged with arson, criminal mischief and other charges. Charges remain pending.

A third investigation resulted in the charging of three defendants with grand larceny and other charges for allegedly stealing tires and rims from cars parked on streets throughout Queens, beginning in November 2019 and lasting until May 2020. Charges are pending in this case as well.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	30	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	1
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	59	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	8
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	21	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF cases	\$0

Richmond County District Attorney’s Office

The Richmond County (Staten Island) District Attorney’s Office received a \$50,144 grant in 2020, partially supporting four assistant district attorneys. The Trials Bureau investigates and prosecutes all program felony cases, and the Criminal Court Bureau prosecutes cases with felony charges that have the potential to be pleaded down to a misdemeanor.

The primary goal of the MVTIFP is to provide an integrated means to prevent and reduce incidences of motor vehicle theft and motor vehicle insurance fraud in Richmond County. The district attorney’s approach to case reviews includes interviews of suspects and witnesses to gain intelligence about defendants’ typical methods and to learn about the latest technologies employed by criminals. The district attorney’s office works closely with its key partners to address insurance fraud-related crimes.

Staten Island experienced a 37 percent increase in the number of reported motor vehicle thefts, mirroring citywide and statewide trends. Despite the increase in reported thefts, fewer cases were prosecuted in 2020 due to court closures resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. In total, 158 cases were prosecuted for motor vehicle theft-related activities, including 95 felony arrests.

Attorneys continued to note the trend of vehicles stolen while left running unattended or with keys left inside. In response, the district attorney’s office and the NYPD utilized social media to remind the community of the importance of locking vehicles and not leaving them running unattended.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	159	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	14
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	0	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	166
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	159	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF cases	\$0

New York City Police Department Auto Crime Division

Part of the Criminal Enterprise Division of the Detective Bureau of the NYPD, the Auto Crime Division’s mission is to reduce the incidence of motor vehicle theft and motor vehicle insurance fraud within New York City through a coordinated approach involving law enforcement, crime analysis and prosecution. The Auto Crime Division utilizes an integrated approach to prevent motor vehicle crime as well as to detect, investigate and prosecute these crimes. The Auto Crime Division received a grant of \$199,000 in 2020 to fund police overtime, vehicle forensics training, equipment and rental vehicles for surveillance and investigations.

The Auto Crime Division utilizes several strategies in combatting motor vehicle related crime. The unit utilizes an in-house team of analysts to monitor trends and data related to auto theft and insurance fraud crimes and to disseminate such information throughout the NYPD and other neighboring jurisdictions to help determine locations for targeted enforcement.

Through investigations into the sale of stolen vehicles and parts on social media and the internet, the Auto Crime Division has gained investigative leads into organized theft rings and has recovered numerous stolen vehicles and parts through buy-bust operations. The use of undercover officers and informants enhances these investigations. The division also maintains extensive interstate and federal law enforcement contacts, which enable investigators to develop information on individuals outside of New York who use the internet for criminal activity.

The use of modern technology – including wiretaps, GPS tracking devices, license plate readers, cameras and smart phone technology – plays an important role in auto crime investigations. Smart phones allow investigators to obtain immediate information in the field, including important records from DMV, the NICB, E-Justice and vehicle salvage records. In addition, advanced computers are used to view and enhance photos and videos to assist in the identification of stolen vehicles or vehicles used in crimes. In 2020, the Auto Crime School conducted a training class on the use of Berla vehicle forensics technology, providing training and vehicle forensics kits to 10 additional auto crime investigators and ensuring citywide availability of this technology.

New York City saw a 67percent increase in the number of reported stolen vehicles. It is suspected that changes in patterns of vehicle usage and other factors resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic influenced this dramatic rise in thefts. The Auto Crime Unit has worked to adjust to current patterns and trends with targeted enforcement efforts and multi-agency response to problem areas.

In addition to its investigative work, the Auto Crime Division also maintains one of only two college accredited courses on Auto Crime and Insurance Fraud in the country. This four-day course is conducted twice a month and 329 attendees have trained in the fundamentals of auto theft and insurance fraud prior to a closure in March, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	1,422	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	75
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	9,037	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	3,890	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	20	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	78

New York Police Department Fraudulent Collision Investigation Squad

The NYPD Fraudulent Collision Investigation Squad received a \$100,000 grant in 2020. The grant paid for overtime for uniformed members and investigators, training and rental vehicles for surveillance, search warrants and arrests. The FCIS works with the Health Care Fraud Task Force to combat no-fault insurance fraud at the state and federal levels, conducting both short- and long-term investigations.

The squad utilized a portion of grant funding to attend training conducted by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners. The training covered the entire fraud investigation process, including identifying fraud schemes, conducting interviews, preparing documentation, resolving fraud allegations, and fundamental legal concepts involved in a fraud examination.

The squad continued working with the DFS on a case that involves a group of individuals claiming to have been victims of pedestrian hit-and-run incidents on public roadways across New York City. These individuals have submitted insurance claims, often using fraudulent identification, and are seeking treatment at various medical clinics. The investigation has identified a ring of suspects who are recruiting participants to fraudulently claim to have been in vehicles that were involved in accidents or to falsely claim to have been struck in pedestrian hit-and-runs. This investigation is ongoing and involves FCIS, members of NYPD's task force, DFS and the Manhattan District Attorney's office.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	N/A*	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	24
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	N/A	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	24
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	N/A	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	7
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	N/A	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	2

*The FCIS responds solely to insurance fraud cases and does not track theft-related statistics.

New York Police Department Auto Larceny Fraud Investigation Unit

The NYPD Auto Larceny Fraud Investigation Unit is a specialized unit formed to combat auto theft fraud in Patrol Borough Queens South. The unit consists of six full-time employees, four investigators and two supervisors. The sole function of the unit is to investigate reported vehicle thefts that have indications of fraud. In 2020, the unit received a grant of \$24,873, which was used primarily to support overtime for the unit's investigation of fraudulent theft reports.

Investigators review all auto theft reports for indicators of fraud. When a case is selected for further investigation, the relevant parties from the insurance industry are contacted, and insurance investigators and investigators coordinate efforts to reveal any inconsistencies in the details of the report. The unit's collaborative program strategy to combat automobile fraud also includes routine communication with the Queens County District Attorney's Office for case development and to ensure that maximum charges are brought against perpetrators of insurance fraud. Additionally, unit members often provide assistance and guidance to patrol officers to improve efforts to detect and prevent auto theft fraud.

The unit opened 197 case investigations and made 123 arrests for suspected false theft reports, significantly lowering the overall number of complaint reports for auto theft in Patrol Borough Queens South.

<i>2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity</i>			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	197	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	197
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	1,240	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	57
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	1,100	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	123
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	123	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	123

Fire Department of New York

The FDNY received a \$124,800 grant in 2020 to fund fire marshals assigned to the Auto Fraud Squad. The Auto Fraud Squad continues to screen all motor vehicle fires throughout the five boroughs of New York City to identify priority incidents and incidents of fraud. The focus of these investigations is forensic examination of the fire scene, evidence recognition and collection and thorough examination of vehicle owners' documents. The Auto Fraud Squad's strategy is to employ all investigative techniques available in a coordinated effort to identify fraud.

The Auto Fraud Squad continued its focus on citywide vehicle fire activity, specifically focusing on incidents involving staged theft, arson, insurance fraud, conspiracy, and associated crimes. The Squad identified, investigated, and brought to prosecution numerous incidents of arson and insurance fraud, resulting in convictions and/or denied or withdrawn insurance claims.

Members of the Auto Fraud Squad screened over 1,700 car fires in New York City in 2020. After screening, cases are selected for investigations that may lead to denial of fraudulent insurance claims, arrest of those

making the claims, and apprehension of those hired to torch the vehicles. The Auto Fraud Squad maintained a strong collaborative relationship with the NYPD Auto Larceny Fraud Investigation Unit, the Queens District Attorney’s Office and DFS, leading to successful investigation and prosecution of serial larceny and arson cases. Grant funding allows the assigned fire marshals additional work time to enhance investigations by canvassing for video and witnesses, screening relevant data from License Plate Readers, viewing various city-controlled security cameras and reviewing E-ZPass® records.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated	1,955	Responses to Motor Vehicle Fires where Fraud Is Suspected	327
Total Arrests	55	Number of Fire Insurance Claims Cancelled Due to Initiation of Law Enforcement Investigation	20
Responses to Motor Vehicle Fires	1,763	Total Value of Claims Denied / Withdrawn	\$291,419

New York City Suburban Region

Nassau County District Attorney’s Office
 Nassau County Police Department
 Suffolk County District Attorney’s Office
 Westchester County District Attorney’s Office
 Yonkers City Police Department

Nassau County District Attorney’s Office

The Nassau County District Attorney’s Office received a \$114,300 grant in 2020, partially funding two assistant district attorneys, two investigators and a legal secretary dedicated to investigating and prosecuting theft and fraud cases. The office’s Vehicle Theft and Fraud Unit was created in 2008 to prosecute motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases, while working closely with members of the Nassau County Police Department, (the NICB and other law enforcement and insurance agencies to detect and reduce the incidence of these crimes.

The unit investigates and prosecutes cases relating to motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud. Staff work with and act as liaisons to other prosecutors’ offices, law enforcement, private entities and the public. The office’s Just Ware Case Management System allows data analysis in tracking vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases to better follow and report these charges, analyze the types of offenses seen and the record dispositions. The unit works closely with the district attorney’s technical investigators on technical aspects of investigations, including monitoring and maintaining surveillance equipment and conducting forensic analysis of electronic devices.

The office coordinated with the police department’s Major Case Bureau Vehicle Theft Section on the re-arrest and prosecution of numerous defendants who reoffended and face significantly longer sentences after previously being charged with grand larcenies where keys were left in unlocked vehicles overnight.

Nassau County continued to see a number of incidences of auto stripping, particularly the theft of catalytic converters from vehicle lots. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, vehicles were frequently left unused, and lots were inactive for long periods of time, providing an opportunity for the theft of parts from vehicles. In one such case, a defendant allegedly stole catalytic converters from 42 different vehicles, causing over \$46,000 in damages. The defendant was arrested and charged with multiple felonies. Charges remain pending.

The office also noted a rise in larcenies and attempted larcenies from auto dealerships. In one such case, two defendants were arrested for attempting to pick up a Tesla valued at \$126,000 after ordering it online and paying with a forged check. Investigation revealed that one of the defendants had previously obtained two other vehicles, worth over \$250,000, through similar fraudulent transactions. The defendants were charged with multiple felony counts; charges remain pending.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	10	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	0
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	0	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	2
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	14	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF cases	\$0

Nassau County Police Department

The Nassau County Police Department received a \$145,869 grant in 2020 to pay for overtime and training for officers, detectives, supervisors and intelligence analysts. This award allows police to conduct numerous operations designed to prevent, deter and reduce the incidence of motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud within Nassau County.

The police department, in collaboration with the district attorney, created strategies to prevent and reduce the incidence of motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud within Nassau County. Strategies cover street level enforcement, investigations and prosecution. The police department strategy involves detectives, police officers, intelligence analysts and supervisors throughout the county and incorporates intelligence-based policing for targeted and comprehensive enforcement and investigations.

The department employed a variety of techniques to target motor vehicle-related crime. Intelligence analysts maintained data on motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud crime to map the locations of car thefts and larcenies from autos. They created intelligence bulletins and other actionable intelligence to conduct targeted and enhanced enforcement and investigations. This included both overt and covert operations at locations where a high incidence of stolen autos and larcenies from autos have occurred, including railroad stations, malls and shopping areas. These efforts led to several arrests and vehicle recoveries.

Detectives also utilized grant funds to conduct a wide variety of enforcement and investigation activities, including: regularly reviewing theft activity; examining stolen vehicle reports and field interviews for fraud indicators; checking national databases for recovery information (such as parking tickets, plate reader hits, ISO, CARFAX and NYSPIN); and indexing stolen vehicles with NICB.

The police department identified and investigated several crime patterns, including residential thefts and tire and rim thefts. The police department continued to see thefts of high-end luxury vehicles from driveways of private residences, and investigation revealed that most of the thefts involved vehicles that were accidentally left unlocked with the keys inside. The Auto Crime Unit monitored the cases for fraud indicators, as well as recovery locations of the vehicles. Through collaboration with numerous agencies, including New York and New Jersey State Police, U.S. Customs & Border Protection, Suffolk County Police, NYPD Auto Crime Division, NICB, and the Waterfront Commission of New York and New Jersey, many of the vehicles were recovered in Newark, Staten Island, Virginia, and Massachusetts, often on shipping containers. As a result of these efforts, many stolen vehicles have been recovered and arrests made across various towns, cities and states.

Detectives also identified a pattern of commercial burglaries of auto repair shops. During the burglaries, the suspects would steal vehicles, vehicle keys, inspection stickers, tools and cash. The investigation was conducted in conjunction with the Pennsylvania State Police, who arrested one suspect in one of the stolen vehicles and developed information leading to other suspects responsible for the burglaries. In cooperation with Suffolk County police and the NYPD, 11 of the vehicles stolen during these burglaries have been recovered, and two additional suspects have been identified. The investigation and prosecutions are ongoing.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	86	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	3
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	589	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	65	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	0	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	29

Suffolk County District Attorney’s Office

The Suffolk County District Attorney’s Office has a Financial Investigations & Money Laundering Bureau that targets white collar crimes, including insurance fraud and motor vehicle theft. The district attorney received a \$283,210 grant in 2020 to fund five positions: two assistant district attorneys, a detective investigator, an office assistant and a paralegal.

The creation and maintenance of the bureau has allowed investigators and prosecutors to strengthen resources and knowledge, while increasing coordination, experience and expertise to combat vehicle-related crimes. The bureau prosecutes all cases related to insurance fraud and motor vehicle theft, as well as all motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases generated by unit investigators, the Suffolk County Police Department, the New York State Police and the East End village police departments. FIMLB also handles referrals from DMV, DFS, the NICB and the Special Investigative Units of insurance carriers.

The bureau successfully concluded several long-term and short-term investigations and prosecutions in 2020. The success of the bureau investigations relies heavily on collaboration between different law

enforcement units and industry partners who understand that, together, they can help reduce the incidence of motor vehicle theft and fraudulent insurance claims. As a result of joint efforts, in 2020 the bureau recovered \$23,111 to insurers and other victims of insurance fraud. In addition, the bureau recovered \$5,966 in restitution for victims of motor vehicle theft cases, including restitution paid directly to vehicle owners.

In one notable theft investigation, a defendant was arrested after the investigation revealed that he was involved in schemes to steal money and/or vehicles from clients while employed as a car salesman at various local dealerships. In one case, the defendant convinced the victim to surrender a vehicle to the dealership so it could be resold, and the victim would only be responsible for the remaining balance on the loan after the sale. Instead, the defendant sold the vehicle and stole the proceeds, and the vehicle was repossessed for non-payment of the loan. In other cases, the defendant stole funds that clients believed would be used to purchase drivers licenses, pay off insurance, or for down payments on vehicles. Since the arrest, dozens of victims have come forward and the investigation is ongoing.

In a major insurance fraud investigation, thirteen individuals and three corporations were indicted in connection with an identity fraud ring that resulted in the theft of over \$1 million from financial institutions in fraudulent vehicle loans and led to the theft of nine motor vehicles. The investigation involved cooperation with the Suffolk County Police, the U.S. Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General, and the U.S. Secret Service. The suspects used more than 20 different fraudulent drivers' licenses and social security cards to obtain vehicle loans and credit card accounts from 19 different financial institutions. The suspects engaged in an elaborate scheme to use social security numbers stolen from individuals with minimal or no credit history (such as children, recent immigrants, elderly and incarcerated individuals) to create fake identities, establish accounts to legitimize the identities, build credit history, and then secure fraudulent loans and credit cards. Prosecution of the defendants is pending.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	17	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	11
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	8	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	22
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	72	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF cases	\$9,077

Suffolk County Police Department

The Suffolk County Police Department received a \$123,556 grant in 2020 to pay for overtime and training. The department employs an intelligence-based and data-driven approach to investigating motor vehicle and insurance fraud crime. The police department utilizes the Property / Auto Crime Unit to maintain a centralized approach and a dedicated command focused on motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud.

There were 1,273 vehicles were reported stolen in Suffolk County, 351 more than in 2019. The vehicle recovery rate decreased slightly to 83.5 percent. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the investigation and enforcement of vehicle theft, hindering the ability to meet with collaborators, victims and witnesses. In addition, the pandemic led to reductions in resources within the Property / Auto Crime Unit, as unit members were infected or required to quarantine. Regularly scheduled information sharing meetings with other regional agencies were canceled or held virtually, impacting the effectiveness of these

meetings. Despite these challenges, the department continued its collaboration with the Suffolk County District Attorney’s Office, as well as with NICB, DMV and area police departments.

Detectives conducted numerous vehicle theft investigations resulting in 26 felony arrests and 10 misdemeanor arrests. One long term investigation led to the arrest of a suspect in connection with the theft of five vehicles from used car dealers. The suspect would typically ask to see or test-drive the vehicles, then would return a different key fob to the salesman, returning at a later time with the actual key to steal the vehicle. The suspect was wanted in Kentucky, Florida and Ohio for similar vehicle related charges.

Detectives collaborated with other agencies, including DMV and insurance companies, to investigate incidents of insurance fraud. In 2020, seven insurance fraud investigations were initiated by the police department, resulting in two felony arrests.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	92	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	7
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	1,273	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	1,063	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	1	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	38

Westchester County District Attorney’s Office

The Westchester County District Attorney’s Office received a \$277,963 grant in 2020 to fund an Auto Crimes Unit with a senior assistant prosecutor and two police investigators. A crime analyst assigned to the unit works with a similar squad at the Yonkers Police Department. In addition to pursuing its own investigations, the unit provides daily assistance to the 42 police departments within the county and conducts extensive investigations with the local agencies.

The WCDA noted several loosely categorized trends in 2020, including thefts of vehicles and components from dealerships, thefts of unlocked vehicles with keys left inside, theft of unattended running vehicles, unauthorized use of vehicles in the context of family / domestic relationships, fraudulent inspection stickers, out-of-state license plates, and stolen vehicle arrests resulting from license plate reader technology. Also of note is that approximately 16 percent of cases referred to the unit were the result of DNA database matches on samples taken from recovered stolen vehicles. The unit expects this trend to continue as the DNA database continues to grow and the collection of forensic trace evidence from vehicles expands.

Between January and September, the number of thefts of high-end vehicles left unlocked with keys inside rose by 60 percent over the same period in 2019. As a result, the Auto Crimes Unit collaborated with several police departments to increase public awareness. A press conference and subsequent social media and media campaign asked the public to secure their vehicles and provided statistics and safety

tips. The number of vehicle thefts began to decline by October, a decline that may be partly attributed to this awareness campaign.

The office also concluded a complex insurance fraud case involving multiple auto body shops in Westchester and Bronx counties that were enhancing damages to vehicles to artificially inflate insurance claims. In January, police simultaneously executed 36 search warrants throughout Westchester and Bronx counties, eventually leading to the arrests of twelve individuals and five corporations on charges including enterprise corruption, insurance fraud, and larceny. Additional arrests and prosecutions are expected in 2021. The investigation was referred by NICB and involved collaboration with the Yonkers Police Department, the New York State Police, the New Rochelle Police Department, and numerous other agencies.

In addition to investigations and prosecutions, the district attorney hosted three local, collaborative, virtual meetings involving representatives from numerous police agencies and covered topics such as Berla vehicle forensics software, general trends in theft and fraud in the area and a specific rash of vehicle thefts in one part of the county. The grant-funded crime analyst coordinated and facilitated these collaborative meetings.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	8	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	2
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	2	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	1
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	17	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF cases	\$0

Yonkers City Police Department

The Yonkers Police Department received a \$122,414 grant in 2020 to pay for a full-time detective and overtime for complex investigations, as well as officer training expenses. The department investigates reports of stolen vehicles, cars with stolen parts, altered VINs, bogus registration and inspection stickers, and out-of-state dealer plates or other suspicious tags. The department works closely with other agencies, such as the NYPD, New York State Police and other local jurisdictions, to combat auto crimes across the City of Yonkers.

The Yonkers Police Department continued its commitment to hosting a designated specialized auto crimes unit within the Detective Division, funding a full-time detective to combat motor vehicle theft and pursue fraud investigations. The unit works closely with the NYPD, the New York State Police, the Westchester County District Attorney’s office, DMV and NICB to investigate auto crime.

The auto crimes unit continued the department’s technology-driven approach to investigating motor vehicle crimes. The assigned detective installs temporary surveillance cameras and license plate readers in critical motor vehicle crime locations, allowing these areas to be monitored during late night and early morning hours. The detective also installed a license plate reader on an unmarked patrol vehicle. These strategies have proven successful.

The Yonkers Police Department continued to see a rise in motorcycle theft in 2020. In many cases, offenders use a truck to lift the motorcycles from the street or from dealer lots. The auto crimes detective

secured an abandoned motorcycle from a tow yard for use as a bait bike. The bait bike, which is equipped with a GPS tracking unit, is placed in high-theft areas and monitored with covert pole cameras. The city has also seen an increase in the theft of wheels from vehicles and has similarly combatted this problem with the use of a bait car and surveillance cameras. The bait bike, car and surveillance cameras have led to multiple successful investigations and arrests.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	249	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	1
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	249	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	49	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	0	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	52

Capital District Region

Albany City Police Department
 Albany County District Attorney’s Office

Albany City Police Department

The Albany Police Department received a \$33,000 grant in 2020 to pay for police overtime and training for officers assigned to its Auto Crimes Task Force, which consists of 36 members, including patrol officers, detectives, sergeants and lieutenants and operates within the department’s Criminal Investigation Division and is supervised by a detective lieutenant and a detective sergeant. The primary objective of the task force is to investigate all auto-related thefts and auto-related insurance fraud.

The Albany Police Department worked to solidify and expand its core group of officers and detectives who comprise the task force, further developing the skills and specializations of current members. The ACTF has utilized several approaches in deterring auto-related theft. Using information gathered by the Capital Region Crime Analysis Center, the task force works in concert with the Traffic Safety Unit, as well as the Neighborhood Engagement Unit, to stay up to date with current trends and to investigate crimes and crime sprees that may extend beyond normal day-to-day duties of task force members.

Throughout the year, the task force worked with the New York State Police to investigate the increased use of temporary license plates from the state of Texas in the area. Investigation revealed that the temporary plates were being purchased illegally online and mailed to area residents for a small fee. The tags were found on vehicles that were used in shootings, assaults, robberies and other crimes, as well as on stolen vehicles. In response, the task force, in collaboration with the New York State Police, Colonie Police Department and DMV, conducted a detail that resulted in the seizure of several of these illegal tags, as well as the recovery of a firearm and the development of intelligence to further the investigation. This investigation is ongoing, and task force continues to explore strategies to combat this ongoing problem.

The grant funding allows members of the task force to work outside normal shifts to thoroughly investigate vehicle crimes through surveillance, follow-up interviews and coordination with outside agencies. In 2020,

the task force partnered with agencies including New York State Police, Albany County Sheriff’s Office, the Colonie Police Department, and DMV to investigate vehicle crime.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	65	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	3
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	350	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	330	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	0	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	26

Albany County District Attorney’s Office

The Albany County District Attorney received a \$65,050 grant from DCJS in 2020 to fund a part-time assistant district attorney and a part-time supervisory prosecutor. This enabled the office to address appropriate cases through the Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Unit. The unit coordinated with law enforcement agencies on education, training, detection, investigation and prosecution of motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases.

The Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Unit of the Albany County District Attorney’s Office continued efforts to build quality investigations and prosecutions through collaboration with area law enforcement agencies. The assigned assistant district attorney continued to meet with representatives of the Albany Police Department, the Colonie Police Department, the Albany County Sheriff’s Office, the New York State Police, Bethlehem Police Department, and Watervliet Police Department to discuss investigations and prosecutions.

The office continued to utilize a vertical prosecution strategy for new and pending cases involving auto theft, resulting in a number of felony convictions in the past year. The office used a coordinated approach between law enforcement, crime analysis experts and the district attorney’s office to detect, prevent, and prosecute these crimes.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	122	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	8
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	0	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	56
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	122	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF cases	\$0

Finger Lakes Region

Monroe County District Attorney’s Office
Monroe County Sheriff’s Office
Rochester Police Department

Monroe County District Attorney’s Office

The Monroe County District Attorney’s Office received \$87,000 in 2020 to fund an assistant district attorney position and travel expenses. The assistant district attorney evaluates cases and prosecutes both felony and misdemeanor offenses; works with DA’s Office investigators who interview witnesses, serve subpoenas, gather and organize evidence; and partners with law enforcement to help solve crimes and build cases for prosecution.

The district attorney participates in the Monroe County Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Task Force, which includes the Rochester Police Department, the Monroe County Sheriff’s Office, the New York State Police, the Brighton Police Department, DMV, DFS, and other local police departments. The task force meets monthly to share information about pending investigations, review referrals provided by DFS, and assign cases for investigation.

Insurance fraud cases are aggressively prosecuted, with an emphasis on maximizing restitution to the insurance companies. The prosecutor works closely with the task force’s DFS representative, who in turn works closely with many of the insurance providers in the area. This collaboration improves prosecutions and benefits the insurance companies.

The district attorney utilizes vertical prosecution for all vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases assigned to the grant-funded prosecutor. Law enforcement agencies that participate in the task force actively seek to locate cars that have been reported stolen and regularly share information with the other task force members, which helps investigators to connect cases across jurisdictions. In one such example, a Gates Police officer was investigating catalytic converter thefts. Through involvement in the task force, the officer was aware of several similar thefts throughout the county and knew to interview an individual about specific locations where the stolen parts were sold. As a result, the district attorney and the task force are now investigating several scrap and auto parts businesses for receiving the stolen parts.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	13	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	2
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	0	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	40
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	167	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF cases	\$2,375

Monroe County Sheriff’s Office

The Monroe County Sheriff’s Office received a \$36,500 grant in 2020 to pay for training and overtime to investigate theft and fraud cases. The sheriff’s office participates in the Monroe County Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Task Force, assigning a sergeant and three investigators to the task force, which collaborates with other members of the law enforcement community in Monroe County, including the district attorney, the Rochester Police Department, New York State Police, DFS, and DMV to reduce motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud within the county.

The MCSO utilizes grant funds to conduct investigations into motor vehicle theft, auto stripping and insurance fraud. In 2020, the sheriff's office responded to 187 reported motor vehicle thefts and recovered 106 stolen vehicles. Members of the county task force investigated 18 cases of possible motor vehicle insurance fraud, resulting in seven arrests. Additionally, task force members investigated eight cases of auto stripping, resulting in five arrests. These investigative efforts also resulted in the denial of 10 separate insurance claims.

The sheriff's office continues to identify and track emerging crime patterns, including motor vehicle thefts and auto stripping cases. These patterns are communicated during monthly meetings of the Monroe County MVTIF Task Force to further identify patterns that may be occurring in other jurisdictions. In addition, the sheriff's office works with the Monroe Crime Analysis Center to better map and track emerging crime patterns.

The sheriff's office also continued to conduct proactive details in areas where patterns of vehicle theft and/or auto stripping have been identified. These details often involve the use of both marked and unmarked units to interdict vehicle thefts and auto stripping incidents. As an example, in 2020 the sheriff's office noted a dramatic uptick in the theft of catalytic converters from parked vehicles. After identifying a suspect in some of the thefts, the sheriff's office, along with other task force members, conducted a surveillance detail on the suspect and eventually observed him leaving his vehicle in an industrial area where many trucks were parked. When the suspect returned to his vehicle, a traffic stop was conducted, and two catalytic converters and a reciprocating saw, used in the removal of the parts, were observed in the back seat. The sheriff's office was able to link the converters to two vehicles in the area, and the defendant was arrested for the thefts. Although other task force members have interviewed the defendant, he has not yet been linked to any other cases.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	40	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	18
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	187	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	6
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	106	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	10
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	1	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	25

Rochester City Police Department

The Rochester Police Department received a \$49,520 grant in 2020 to pay for overtime for investigations and training on the latest motor vehicle crime trends. The Auto Theft Unit, under the command of the department's Special Operations Division, is responsible for coordinating investigations into motor vehicle related crime initiatives and utilizes personnel from other divisions within the department, as needed. The agency also participates in the county's MVTIF Task Force as noted. In 2020, grant funding allowed Rochester police to focus on targeted details and investigations. Data indicated that the majority of vehicle thefts in Rochester involved vehicles that were left running unattended or unlocked with keys inside. The Monroe County Crime Analysis Center used data on reported thefts to generate geographical hot spots, which led to targeted patrols and investigations.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	29	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	40
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	828	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	11
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	432	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	6
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	1	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	23

Western Region

Buffalo City Police Department
 Cheektowaga Town Police Department
 Erie County District Attorney’s Office
 Niagara County District Attorney’s Office
 Niagara County Sheriff Department
 Niagara Falls City Police Department

Buffalo City Police Department

The Buffalo Police Department received a \$106,884 grant in 2020 to pay for detective overtime and travel and training costs to enhance the program’s effectiveness. Due to organizational restructuring in 2018, motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud investigations are now handled by detectives in the department’s five patrol districts and overseen by the investigative services captain. In addition, the Neighborhood Engagement Team has begun community education on auto theft prevention to strengthen the department’s proactive approach to vehicle crime.

In 2020, the Buffalo Police Department utilized grant funding for overtime to allow detectives to investigate 1,617 instances of reported vehicle theft and recover 1,407 stolen vehicles. The department continued to collaborate with other agencies and the insurance industry.

The department continued its major educational outreach effort regarding the dangers of leaving vehicles running unattended. In the winter months, the Neighborhood Engagement Team was mobilized to distribute over 1,000 flyers and posters throughout the city, especially in areas with high incidence of car theft. In addition to the flyers, television and print news covered the effort.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	1,617	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	0
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	1,697	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	1,407	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	0	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	298

Cheektowaga Town Police Department

The Cheektowaga Police Department received a \$36,542 grant in 2020 for police overtime and training. Eleven of the agency's 19 detectives handle motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases.

The police department has one detective assigned to lead the Auto Theft Squad. This detective coordinates motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud investigations and assigns cases to other detectives. This strategy has been in place for several years and has successfully reduced motor vehicle theft and fraud cases in Cheektowaga.

The Cheektowaga Police Department has continued to focus its grant activities on investigations into motor vehicle thefts and larcenies of property / auto parts from motor vehicles and fraudulent activities, including insurance fraud, forged vehicle identification numbers and forged titles. Grant funds were utilized to provide 543 hours of overtime for detectives' investigations and to combat motor vehicle related crime.

The police department has a strong commitment to working with other agencies. Inter-agency cooperation and intelligence sharing are main components of grant activities. A close working relationship with outside agencies proves to be beneficial for both Cheektowaga and the surrounding municipalities. In 2020, examples of such inter-agency collaboration included: fraud investigations with several different insurance carriers; multiple checks of confidential VIN numbers with assistance from NICB, a coordinated investigation with the Buffalo Police Department that led to the recovery of 18 vehicles stolen from a rental car lot, and collaboration with Niagara Falls Police and the Niagara County Sheriff's Office to identify two suspects involved in a violent robbery and car theft.

In investigating auto thefts, crime scene detectives photograph and process every recovered stolen motor vehicle, submitting any evidence collected to the Erie County Central Police Services Laboratory for further processing. In 2020, 133 vehicles were processed.

The police department also continued a community awareness and education program in response to thefts of vehicles that were left running unattended and thefts of property from unlocked vehicles. A flyer was developed and distributed to advise the public of the risk of theft of unattended vehicles, as well as some simple deterrents to auto theft. Detectives also routinely surveilled locations, such as gas stations and convenience stores, and, when unattended vehicles were observed, detectives advised the owners of the risk of theft and New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law regarding unattended vehicles.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	177	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	6
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	208	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	147	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	2
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	3	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	10

Erie County District Attorney's Office

The Erie County District Attorney's Office received a \$104,758 grant in 2020 to pay for training and a full-time assistant district attorney. The assistant district attorney assigned to motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud cases is supported by the staff of the Special Investigations and Prosecutions Bureau. The prosecutor works closely with detectives from the Buffalo and Cheektowaga police departments and other law enforcement agencies throughout the area, to collaborate with ongoing investigations. The prosecutor vertically prosecutes the more serious motor vehicle theft crimes, as well as all the insurance fraud cases in Erie County.

The district attorney made several adjustments to the way cases were investigated and prosecuted due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Prosecutions were slowed significantly due to court closures, but the ECDA was able to improve its collaboration with the Cheektowaga Police Department. During an investigation into multiple thefts of catalytic converters, the detective and the prosecutor from the district attorney identified two defendants with 13 open cases involving the possession of stolen vehicles. The district attorney is currently working with attorneys for the defendants to negotiate a resolution to these cases.

Vehicle theft in Erie County can be divided into two distinct types: crimes of opportunity and crimes for profit. Most vehicle theft cases fall into the first category and involve vehicles left running unattended or vehicles parked with the keys inside. The vehicles are often taken for joyriding or are stripped for parts and then dumped. The second type of vehicle theft often involves drug-related thefts and/or thefts from rental agencies, which is a pervasive problem in the community.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	23	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	0
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	4	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	23
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	0	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF cases	\$0

Niagara County District Attorney's Office

The Niagara County District Attorney's Office received \$109,443 in grant funding in 2020 to support a Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Prevention Unit consisting of a full-time assistant district attorney and a full-time investigator. The assistant prosecutor and investigator collaborate with all law enforcement agencies operating within the county, as well as other insurance fraud investigators. Investigations by law enforcement agencies are referred to the assistant district attorney for vertical prosecution to ensure that all cases are prosecuted to the fullest extent possible.

The district attorney continued its efforts to identify, combat and deter motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud, despite challenges derived from the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a dramatic increase in vehicle theft crimes by prolific offenders, including one defendant who accrued six separate court dockets related to vehicle thefts from April through July. Three of these cases involved high speed pursuits, two of which led to crashes involving police vehicles. The district attorney coordinated with numerous agencies, including the New York State Police, the Niagara County Sheriff's Office, the Niagara Falls Police Department, the Lewiston Police Department, and the U.S. Border Protection Air and Marine service to apprehend the defendant and file motions to prevent him from being released on his own recognizance, as had occurred previously. The defendant was ultimately indicted on 21 counts; prosecution was pending at the end of 2020.

Staff also adjusted to the pandemic by holding virtual hearings and obtaining witness statements for grand jury proceedings to reduce the need for in-person appearances.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	73	Total Indictments for MVTIF Offenses	3
Investigations Initiated – Fraud	1	Total Convictions for MVTIF Offenses	48
Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	138	Amount of Restitution Ordered as a Result of MVTIF cases	\$0

Niagara County Sheriff's Office

The Niagara County Sheriff's Office received a \$20,000 grant in 2020 to pay for staff overtime and training. The Sheriff's Office Stolen Vehicle Task Force includes deputies, supervisors and investigators tasked with reviewing cases, trends, and field intelligence to combat theft and fraud. The Sheriff's Office continues to collaborate with other law enforcement agencies to reduce theft and fraud throughout Western New York.

The Niagara County Sheriff's Office Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud Task Force, with road patrol deputies and investigators from the Criminal Investigation Bureau, continued to work diligently to curb motor vehicle theft, larcenies of vehicle parts and accessories, and insurance fraud in 2020. Despite these efforts, the number of reported vehicle thefts doubled, and incidences of auto stripping and larcenies from vehicles also increased significantly.

Many defendants were arrested multiple times for similar vehicle theft related crimes, including a series of thefts that occurred in and around the Tuscarora Reservation. The individuals arrested for those crimes were also involved in robberies and shootings in Niagara Falls.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	56	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	2
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	50	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	0
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	32	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	1
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	3	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	40

Niagara Falls City Police Department

The Niagara Falls Police Department received a \$23,400 grant in 2020 to pay for staff overtime and training. The Motor Vehicle Theft and Fraud Unit is managed as a special operation by the captain of the Criminal Investigation Division and emphasizes investigations and appropriate follow-up. In addition, the unit collaborates with the Traffic Division to identify suspicious accident reports and possible fraud cases.

The Niagara Falls Police Department, with the support of the Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud grant, was able to provide city residents with 400 hours of overtime by detectives who investigate stolen motor vehicle investigations; 112 hours of surveillance by plain clothes officers to support the detectives with their investigations; and 55 hours of overtime for the detective lieutenant to complete necessary documentation for court proceedings pertaining to motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Investigations Initiated – Theft	300	Investigations Initiated – Fraud	4
Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts Agency Wide	218	Accidents Investigated in which Fraud Is Suspected	35
Recovered Stolen Motor Vehicles Agency Wide	212	Claims Withdrawn or Denied Due to Investigation	0
Thefts Determined to be Fraudulent Agency Wide	5	Total Arrests for MVTIF Offenses	403

Statewide

New York Anti-Car Theft and Fraud Association, Inc.
New York Prosecutors Training Institute, Inc.

New York Anti-Car Theft and Fraud Association, Inc.

The New York Anti-Car Theft and Fraud Association, Inc. is a statewide not-for-profit educational organization whose mission is to reduce auto crime and insurance fraud in New York. The association received a \$65,100 Motor Vehicle Theft and Insurance Fraud grant from DCJS in 2020 to produce training webinars, seminars and conferences. The association also offers educational and training programs, collaborative sharing opportunities and online resources for law enforcement personnel and for insurance special investigation units and claims personnel. The association provides information about motor vehicle theft and fraud to consumers and continues to sponsor and manage training events, meetings and outreach efforts in auto crime prevention and insurance fraud detection and investigations throughout the year.

The association's training efforts concentrated on both vehicle crime and insurance fraud, providing effective professional training in theft and fraud investigation and deterrence. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the association was forced to switch its focus from in-person conferences and trainings to virtual meetings, trainings and webinars. The association continues to expand its outreach by improving cooperative working relationships with other associations and New York State agencies.

The spirit of cooperation fostered at the conferences and training events continues through the communication networks that are established among law enforcement investigators long after the programs conclude. The association's training classes offer attendees the ability to access many different agencies that they may not have contact with during the normal course of business. The association's training seminars have opened new information resources to law enforcement to aid with investigations of insurance fraud and other crimes through the sharing of information and expertise.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Activity

Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Seminars, Trainings & Conferences	7	Webinar Trainings Produced	0
Verified Attendees	1,001	Verified Webinar Views	6
MVT Articles Published	0	MVIF Articles Published	0
Webinars for Law Enforcement Agencies	24	Webinars for Prosecutorial Offices	0

New York Prosecutors Training Institute, Inc.

The New York Prosecutors Training Institute received a \$40,740 grant in 2020 to enhance training for prosecutors and law enforcement professionals on motor vehicle theft and fraud at no cost to participants. In 2020, the institute hosted 26 conferences and webinars attended by approximately 1,989 prosecutors and law enforcement professionals. In addition, prosecutors earned 6,725 Continuing Legal Education credits from the institute's online training library.

In 2020, five institute attorneys, including the executive director and deputy director, worked collectively to help prosecutors navigate the significant changes to New York’s Criminal Procedure Laws and Executive Orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The institute published nine articles related to vehicle theft and insurance fraud on topics including protective orders, speedy trial, discovery and bail reform, technology, and evidentiary issues.

The institute also conducted five MVTIF related webinars, including: A Crash Course in Auto Crime and Auto Insurance Fraud: The NOT so Victimless Crime, as well as a live online course on Auto and Insurance Fraud.

2020 Grant-Funded Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Activity			
Performance Measure	Total	Performance Measure	Total
Seminars, Trainings & Conferences	2	Webinar Trainings Produced	5
Verified Attendees	266	Verified Webinar Views	745
Agencies Represented	60		
MVT Articles Published	9	MVIF Articles Published	9
Webinars for Law Enforcement Agencies	0	Webinars for Prosecutorial Offices	5

V. Appendix—2020 Statistics

2020 Reported Incidents of Motor Vehicle Theft						
Rank	County	MV Theft		Rank	County	MV Theft
1	Kings	2,943		32	Tompkins	40
2	Queens	2,544		33	Fulton	36
3	Bronx	2,130		34	Cayuga	34
4	Erie	1,955			Sullivan	34
5	New York	1,395		36	Madison	32
6	Monroe	1,304		37	Montgomery	30
7	Suffolk	1,264		38	Putnam	29
8	Onondaga	928		39	Allegany	28
9	Westchester	741		40	Orleans	27
10	Nassau	702		41	Clinton	26
11	Albany	414		42	Chenango	25
12	Niagara	365		43	Columbia	24
13	Richmond	246			Franklin	24
14	Schenectady	245			Otsego	24
15	Broome	218		46	Herkimer	23
16	Oneida	208		47	Washington	22
17	Orange	195		48	Delaware	19
18	Rensselaer	171			St. Lawrence	19
19	Dutchess	146			Tioga	19
20	Oswego	105		51	Cortland	16
21	Rockland	103			Seneca	16
22	Chautauqua	76		53	Warren	14
23	Saratoga	68		54	Greene	12
	Ulster	68			Schoharie	12
25	Chemung	67		56	Essex	10
26	Jefferson	66		57	Wyoming	9
27	Cattaraugus	52		58	Livingston	8
28	Steuben	46		59	Lewis	7
29	Genesee	45		60	Hamilton	3
30	Ontario	43		61	Yates	2
	Wayne	43		62	Schuyler	0

Appendix—2020 Statistics (continued)

2020 Suspected Motor Vehicle Insurance Fraud Incidents						
Rank	County	MV Insurance Fraud		Rank	County	MV Insurance Fraud
1	Kings	6,516		32	Chemung	17
2	Queens	5,302		33	Allegany	16
3	Bronx	3,464			Cayuga	16
4	Nassau	2,725			Essex	16
5	New York	1,505		36	Saratoga	15
6	Suffolk	1,224			Steuben	15
7	Westchester	561		38	Chenango	13
8	Erie	385			Greene	13
9	Richmond	380		40	Cortland	12
10	Orange	368			Livingston	12
11	Albany	324			Tompkins	12
12	Monroe	254			Warren	12
13	Onondaga	138		44	Herkimer	11
14	Rockland	124		45	Clinton	10
15	Niagara	79			Tioga	10
16	Oneida	71		47	Montgomery	9
17	Rensselaer	69		48	Columbia	7
18	Broome	66			Madison	7
	Dutchess	66			Orleans	7
20	Schenectady	47			Otsego	7
21	Ulster	45			Wyoming	7
22	Lewis	32		53	Franklin	6
23	Sullivan	28			Wayne	6
24	Putnam	27		55	Delaware	5
25	Jefferson	25			Fulton	5
26	Ontario	24			Hamilton	5
	St. Lawrence	24			Washington	5
28	Chautauqua	23		59	Schoharie	2
29	Cattaraugus	22			Schuyler	2
30	Genesee	19			Yates	2
31	Oswego	18		62	Seneca	1