

A Profile of the DuPage County Auto Theft Task Force (BATTLE)



Prepared for

the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council

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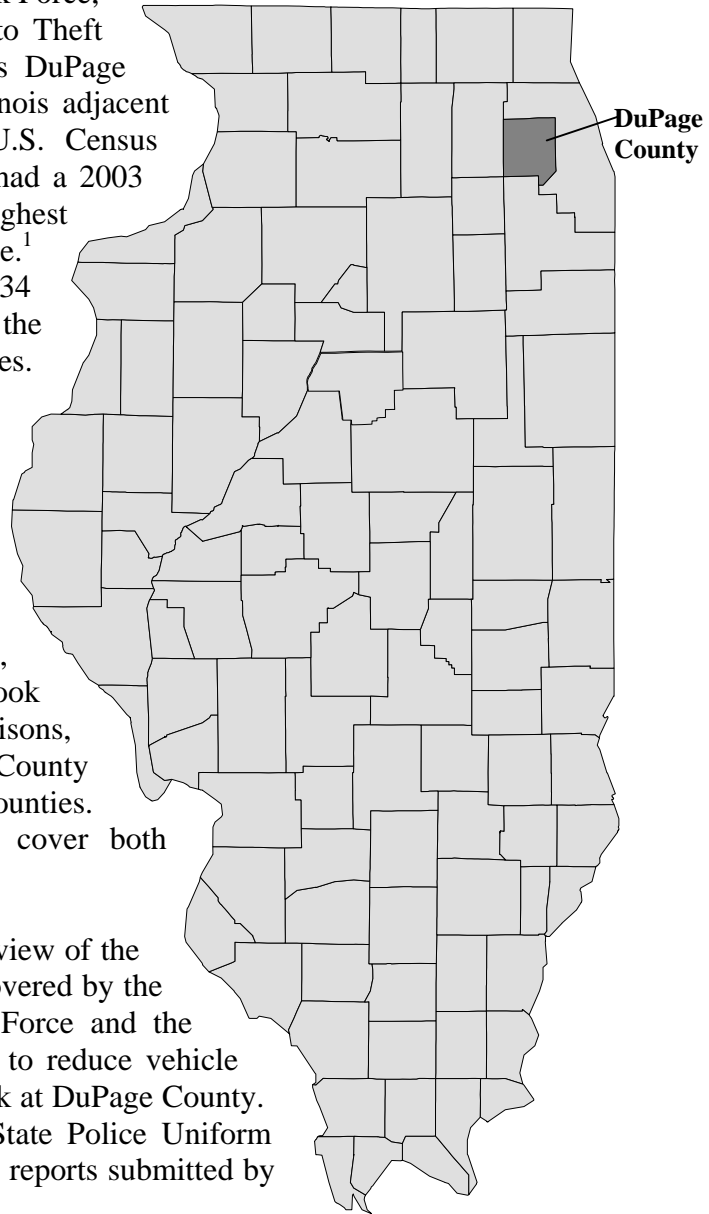
**ILLINOIS MOTOR VEHICLE
THEFT PREVENTION COUNCIL**

Introduction

The DuPage County Auto Theft Task Force, also known as BATTLE (Beat Auto Theft Through Law Enforcement), serves DuPage County, located in northeastern Illinois adjacent to Cook County. According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates, DuPage County had a 2003 population of 925,188, the second highest county population in the state.¹ DuPage County covers an area of 334 square miles and ranks second in the state for number of registered vehicles. According to the Illinois Secretary of State's Office, there were 847,008 passenger cars and trucks registered in DuPage County in 2003.²

DuPage County is one of the five collar counties (DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will) that border Cook County. To provide comparisons, information specific to DuPage County will be compared to other collar counties. Other Council-funded task forces cover both Kane and Will Counties.

This profile provides a general overview of the vehicle theft problem in the areas covered by the DuPage County Auto Theft Task Force and the activities the task force engages in to reduce vehicle theft. The statistics in this report look at DuPage County. The data is based on the Illinois State Police Uniform Crime Reports and the monthly data reports submitted by staff of BATTLE.



¹ United States Bureau of the Census. 2004.

² State of Illinois. Office of the Secretary of State. 2004.

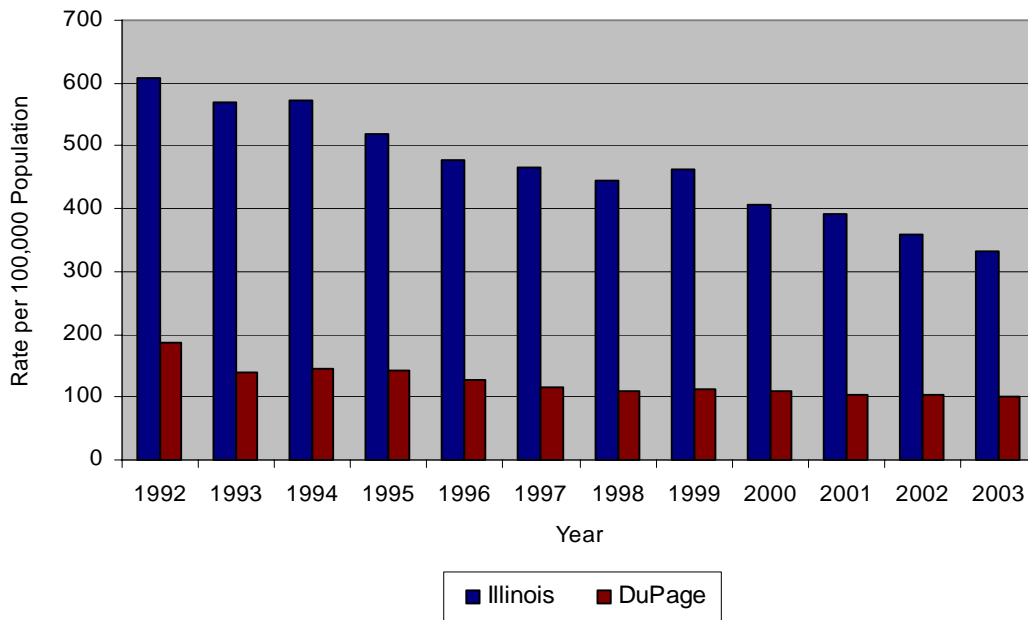
Motor Vehicle Theft in DuPage County

According to the Illinois State Police, the number of motor vehicle thefts reported in the area covered by the DuPage County Auto Theft Task Force (BATTLE) decreased 38 percent between 1992 and 2003, from 1,522 thefts to 944 thefts. Motor vehicle thefts decreased 41 percent statewide during the same period.

Between 1992 and 2003, a time when the population in the area covered by BATTLE was growing, the motor vehicle theft rate in the region decreased 45 percent, from 187 to 102 offenses per 100,000 population. The statewide motor vehicle theft rate similarly decreased, from 609 to 334 offenses per 100,000 population. Figure 1 shows the motor vehicle theft rates in Illinois and the BATTLE area during this period.

Figure 1

**DuPage County Motor Vehicle Theft Rate
1992-2003**



Data Source: Illinois Uniform Crime Reports

Since 1992, BATTLE's data reports indicate that even though the vehicle theft offenses and rates have decreased in DuPage County, there has been an expansion in the types of vehicle thefts and insurance fraud offenses. Vehicles have been stolen through the use of falsified cashiers' checks, stolen titles, and by stealing keys during test-drives from automobile dealerships. The task force also reports growth in the number of thefts

committed with key cuts. Key cuts occur when someone records a serial number off a vehicle and then uses the number to have a car dealer cut them a key. BATTLE has also encountered organized importation of vehicles stolen from Canada, as well as a theft ring of Polish and Russian nationals involved in stealing air bags.

Program Summary

BATTLE combats auto theft and insurance fraud in DuPage County by combining the expertise and resources of multiple law enforcement agencies. BATTLE links the efforts of the Illinois State Police, the DuPage County Sheriff's Department, and the DuPage County State's Attorney's Office. BATTLE's multijurisdictional, cooperative approach maximizes its ability to investigate and prosecute auto theft in DuPage County. Implemented by the DuPage County Sheriff's Department, BATTLE's services are available to all law enforcement agencies within DuPage County. BATTLE works cooperatively with other Council-funded programs, as well as other law enforcement and insurance industry organizations. The task force has also worked with the DuPage County Sheriff's Gang Suppression Unit, the DuPage Metropolitan Enforcement Group, and the National Insurance Crime Bureau when the need has arisen.

The task force conducts local training sessions on auto theft investigation for patrol officers and police investigators. BATTLE also offers a temporary duty assignment for local police officers, providing these officers the opportunity to work with experienced vehicle theft and fraud investigators. BATTLE officers also develop intelligence bulletins for local law enforcement that identify vehicle theft trends and high theft areas in DuPage County. The task force conducts seminars on vehicle theft and fraud prevention for auto dealers, educating dealers about current fraud practices, and reviewing the dealers' security procedures. BATTLE also presents anti-car theft programs to community organizations and neighborhood watch groups.

Program Activity

Since the program began reporting data in September 1992, through December 2003, the DuPage County Auto Theft Task Force (BATTLE) has conducted 1,379 self-initiated and assisted investigations, resulting in 846 arrests and 450 convictions. Figure 2 shows the number of motor vehicle theft investigations, arrests, and convictions for each program year.³

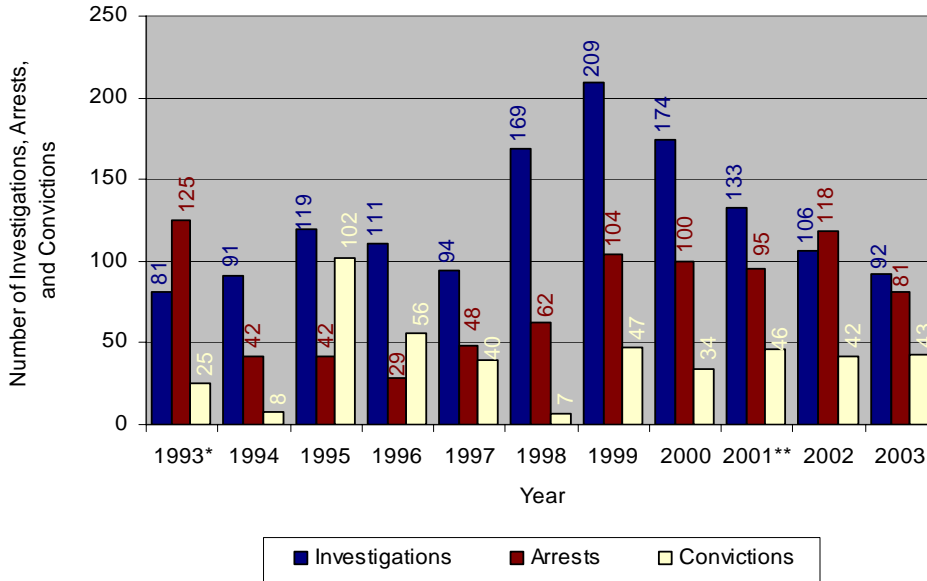
From September 1992 through 2003, the task force has recovered 1,037 vehicles worth an estimated \$17 million. Figure 3 shows the number of recoveries made by the task force each year.⁴

³ Due to the time lapse between an arrest and subsequent conviction, the number of convictions during a year does not directly reflect the number of arrests during the same year.

⁴ BATTLE reports the total estimated value of all the vehicles that it recovers each month. However, this includes only cases handled by the task force, not all vehicle thefts within DuPage County.

Figure 2

**DuPage Motor Vehicle Theft Task Force (BATTLE)
Investigations, Arrests and Convictions
1993-2003**



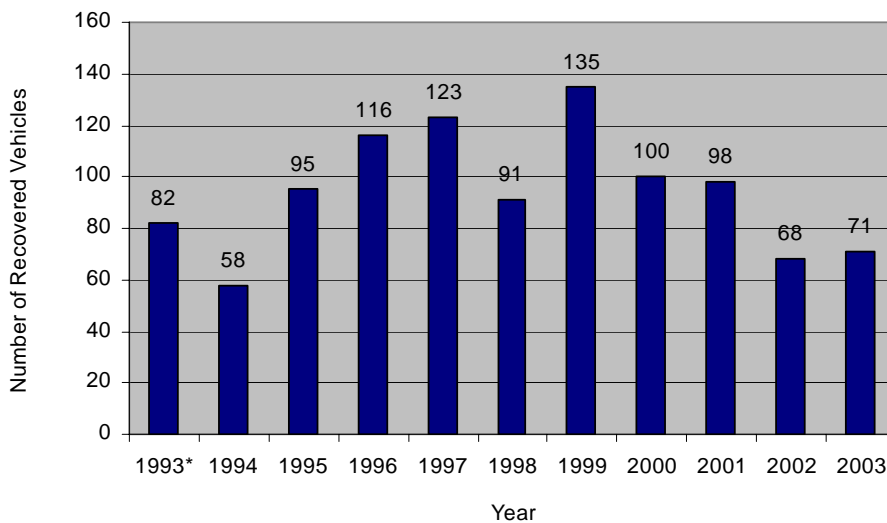
*The 1993 data covers the period from September 1992 thru December 1993.

**Beginning in 2001, Investigations were recorded as either Initiated (by the unit) or Assisted (assists to other agencies) Investigations. These yearly totals represent the combination of both.

Data Source: BATTLE monthly data reports

Figure 3

**DuPage County Auto Theft Task Force (BATTLE)
Motor Vehicle Recoveries
1993-2003**



*The 1993 data covers the period from September 1992 thru December 1993.

Data Source: BATTLE monthly data reports

Funding Summary

The Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Act that took effect on January 1, 1991, created the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council. The Council has the statutory responsibility to “prevent, combat, and reduce motor vehicle theft in Illinois.”⁵

The Act also established the Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Trust Fund, a special trust fund in the State Treasury, from which the Council makes grants to eligible applicants for programs that address motor vehicle theft in Illinois. The Act requires all insurance companies licensed to write private passenger motor vehicle physical damage coverage in Illinois to pay annually into this trust fund an amount equal to \$1 for each earned car year of exposure for physical damage insurance coverage during the previous calendar year. Approximately \$6 million is collected each year.

The Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Trust Fund funds the DuPage County Auto Theft Task Force (BATTLE). Table 1 lists the amount granted to and expended by the task force for each program year.

Table 1

DuPage County Auto Theft Task Force (BATTLE)
Funding by Program Year

Year	Grant Amount	Expenditures
1993*	\$375,000	\$344,758
1994**	\$505,538	\$485,348
1995	\$398,175	\$389,005
1996	\$358,356	\$328,744
1997	\$378,279	\$276,445
1998	\$373,082	\$349,121
1999	\$389,542	\$362,253
2000	\$397,631	\$325,961
2001	\$409,553	\$359,011
2002	\$421,839	\$290,712
2003	\$434,494	\$263,953
TOTAL	\$4,441,489	\$3,775,311

*The 1993 fiscal data includes the period from August 1992 to August 1993.

**The 1994 fiscal data includes the period from August 1993 thru December 1994.

Note: Unexpended grant funds are returned to the Council

⁵ Chapter 20 Illinois Compiled Statutes 4005/2.

Figure 4 summarizes BATTLE’s program expenditures from 1992 through 2003. Expenditures are divided into six categories:

Personnel—includes salaries, social security, and fringe benefits for program staff.

Equipment—includes computers, communication devices, and other equipment with a cost greater than \$50.

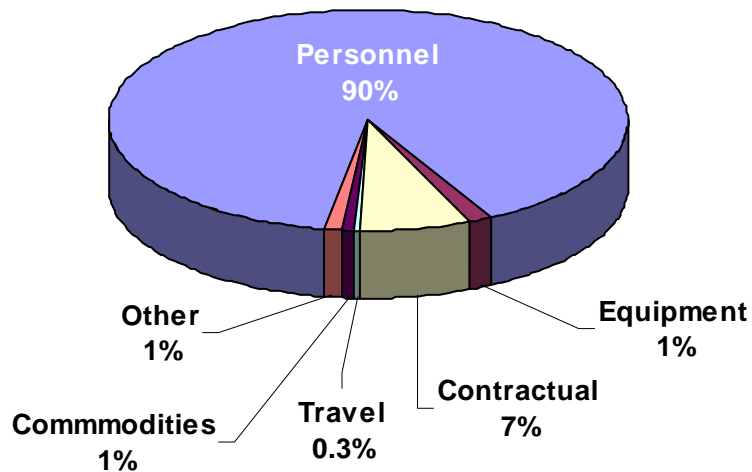
Commodities—includes consumable supplies (such as office supplies) and equipment costing less than \$50.

Travel—includes lodging, food, and transportation expenses incurred by program staff while conducting official program-related business.

Contractual—includes facility costs, utilities, telephone service, equipment rentals, and wages for hourly personnel.

Other—includes any costs not covered by the above categories.

Figure 4
DuPage County Auto Theft Task Force (BATTLE)
Percentage of Expenditures by Category
1993*-2003



*The 1993 fiscal data covers the period from August 1992 to August 1993.

**Due to rounding, the category percentages may not total 100 percent.

Conclusion

Since the DuPage County Auto Theft Task Force (BATTLE) began operation, vehicle thefts have declined within the task force's jurisdiction. From 1992 to 2003, motor vehicle thefts in DuPage County decreased 38 percent, from 1,522 to 944. During this same time the vehicle theft rate has also decreased by 45 percent, from 187 to 102 offenses per 100,000 population.

The FBI estimates that the average value of a vehicle stolen in the United States in 2002 was \$6,701.⁶ Based on this figure, the decrease in auto thefts in DuPage County amounts to a saving of \$3.9 million.

BATTLE has received a total of \$4.4 million in funding from the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Trust Fund, and has recovered an estimated \$17 million in stolen vehicles. Combining the recovery value with the savings from reduced auto theft, the task force has produced a 'return rate' of approximately \$4.75 for every \$1 of funding.

⁶ This is the most recent estimate available. *Crime in the United States – 2002: Uniform Crime Reports*. Federal Bureau of Investigations. 2004.

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