

# **A Profile of the Northeast Metro Auto Theft Task Force (NEMAT)**

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*Prepared for*

**the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council**

**Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor  
Larry G. Trent, Chairman**

**June, 2004**

**Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority**

**Lori G. Levin  
Executive Director**



**ILLINOIS MOTOR VEHICLE  
THEFT PREVENTION COUNCIL**

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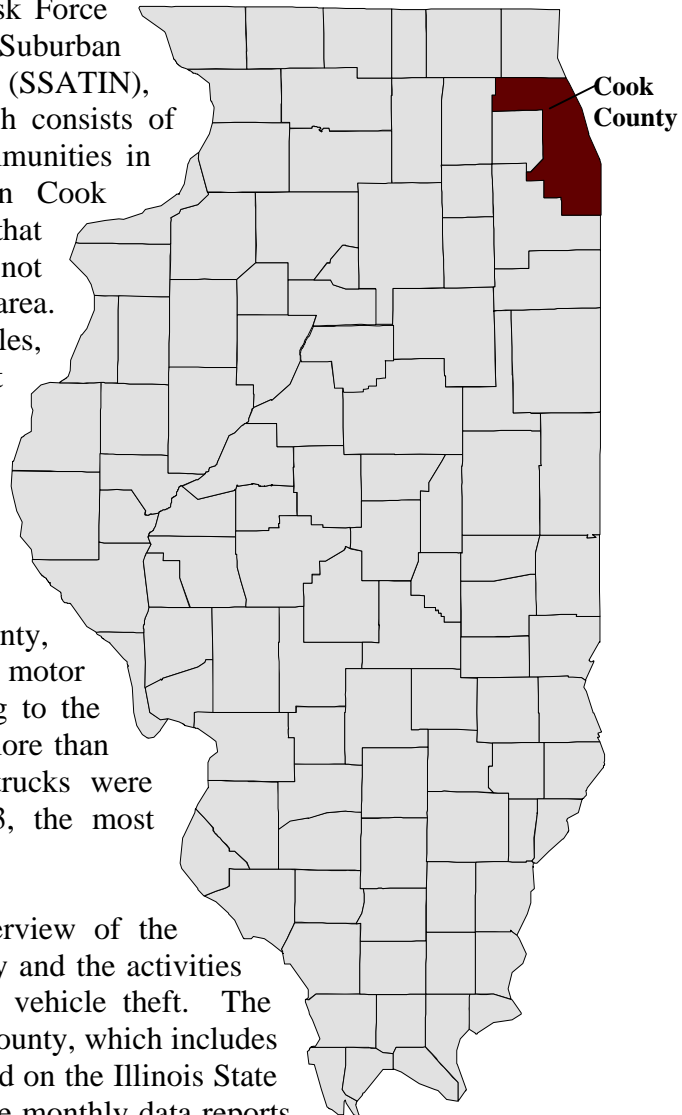
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## Introduction

The Northeast Metro Auto Theft Task Force (NEMAT), formerly named South Suburban Auto Theft Interdiction Network (SSATIN), serves primarily Cook County, which consists of the City of Chicago, as well as communities in the southern and western suburban Cook County areas. It is important to note that before 2003, the City of Chicago was not included in NEMAT's service area. Covering an area of 946 square miles, Cook County has the highest population density among Illinois' 102 counties. According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates for 2003, Cook County had a population of 5.3 million residents.<sup>1</sup>

As the state's most populated county, Cook County is a major center of motor vehicle traffic in Illinois. According to the Illinois Secretary of State's Office, more than 2 million passenger vehicles and trucks were registered in Cook County in 2003, the most vehicles of any Illinois county.<sup>2</sup>

This profile provides a general overview of the vehicle theft problem in Cook County and the activities the task force engages in to reduce vehicle theft. The statistics in this report look at Cook County, which includes the City of Chicago. The data is based on the Illinois State Police Uniform Crime Reports and the monthly data reports submitted by staff of NEMAT.



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<sup>1</sup> Population Estimate for Cook County. United States Bureau of the Census. 2004.

<sup>2</sup> State of Illinois, Office of the Secretary of State. 2004.

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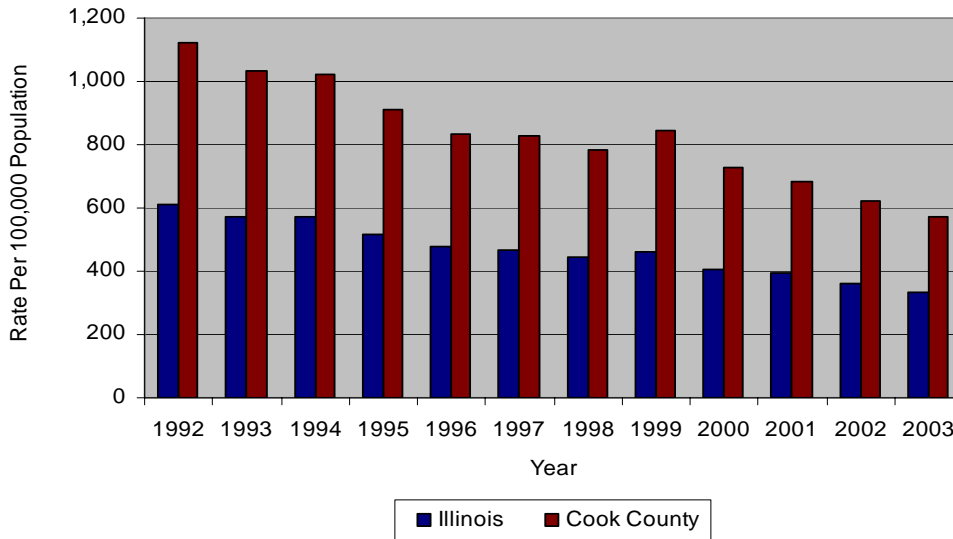
## Motor Vehicle Theft in Cook County

According to the Illinois State Police, the number of motor vehicle thefts reported in the area covered by the Northeast Metro Auto Theft Task Force (NEMAT) decreased 47 percent between 1992 and 2003, from 58,238 thefts to 30,661 thefts. Motor vehicle thefts decreased 41 percent statewide during the same period. In 2003, Cook County accounted for approximately 73 percent of motor vehicle thefts in Illinois.

Between 1992 and 2003, a time when the population in the area covered by NEMAT was growing, the motor vehicle theft rate in the region decreased 49 percent, from 1,120 to 573 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 NEMAT area during this period.

**Figure 1**

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



Data Source: Illinois Uniform Crime Reports

## Program Summary

NEMAT combats auto theft and insurance fraud in suburban Cook County and Chicago by combining the expertise and resources of multiple law enforcement agencies. Operating since 1992, NEMAT links the efforts of the Illinois State Police, the National Insurance Crime Bureau, the Cook County Sheriff's Office, the Cook County State's Attorney's Investigations Office, and the police departments of the following communities: Berkeley, Chicago, Cicero, Dolton, Orland Park, and Stone Park. NEMAT's multi-jurisdictional, cooperative approach maximizes its ability to investigate and prosecute auto theft throughout Cook County.

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From 1992 to 1999, NEMAT's service area included 53 communities within south suburban Cook County. In 2000, the task force expanded its service area to include 18 additional communities in Cook County's western suburbs, an area known as the I-290 Eisenhower Corridor. Since then, NEMAT has expanded its service area to the City of Chicago, bringing the total number of communities served by the program to 63.

NEMAT works cooperatively with other Council-funded programs, as well as other law enforcement and insurance industry organizations. In recent years, NEMAT has conducted joint investigations with the DuPage County Auto Theft Task Force, the Secretary of State Special Audit Teams, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The task force has also worked with the Union Pacific Railroad and the National Insurance Crime Bureau.

During the past two years, NEMAT enforcement activity has seen a steady increase in the amount of investigations conducted by the unit in the City of Chicago. In 2001, 40 percent of the total investigations conducted by NEMAT occurred in Chicago. Since then, the percentage has increased to 49 percent in 2002 and over 50 percent in 2003.

One of the largest and fastest growing vehicle theft problems in Illinois and across the United States is identity theft. Over the past four years, NEMAT personnel have witnessed a steady increase of more than 40 percent in the number of investigations that involve identity theft. In addition, the types of offenders are diverse – they transcend age, ethnic, and gender background and are involved in a variety of companion crimes. NEMAT personnel have conducted joint investigations with the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), Secret Service, and the Federal Bureau of Investigations, where drug trafficking, as well as bank and securities fraud, have been committed in conjunction with the theft of vehicles. Offenders in these investigations have assumed the identity of victims who are deceased, business partners, elderly, and persons living throughout the United States.

## **Program Activity**

Since the program began in November 1992, through December 2003, the Northeast Metro Auto Theft Task Force (NEMAT) has conducted 2,256 self-initiated and assisted investigations, resulting in 1,738 arrests and 634 convictions. Figure 2 shows the number of motor vehicle theft investigations, arrests, and convictions for each program year.<sup>3</sup>

From November 1992 through 2003, the task force has recovered 2,440 vehicles worth an estimated \$40 million. Figure 3 shows the number of vehicle recoveries made by the task force for each year<sup>4</sup>.

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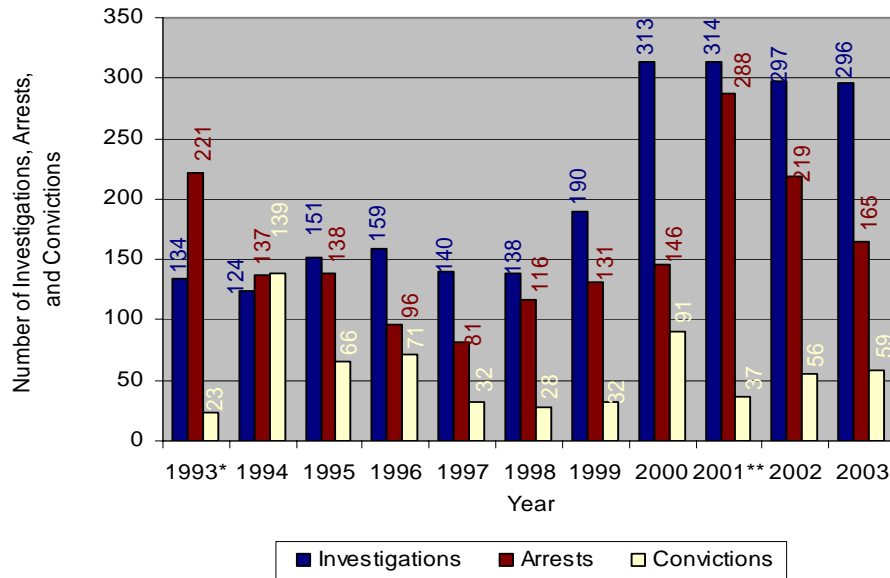
<sup>3</sup> Due to the time lapse between an arrest and subsequent prosecution, the number of prosecutions and convictions during a year does not directly reflect the number of arrests during the same year.

<sup>4</sup> NEMAT 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 Cook County.

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**Figure 2**

**Northeast Metro Auto Theft Task Force  
Investigations, Arrests, and Convictions  
1993-2003**



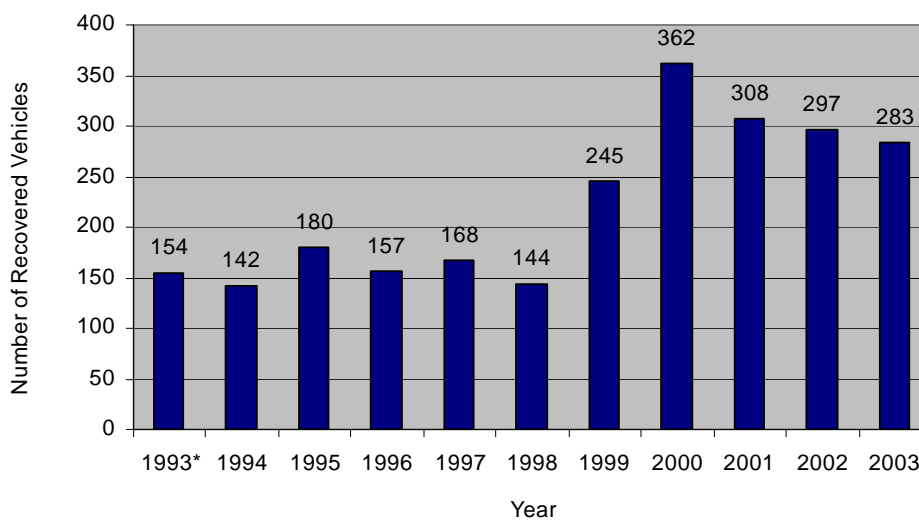
\*The 1993 data covers the period from December 1992 thru December 1993.

\*\*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: NEMAT monthly data reports

**Figure 3**

**Northeast Auto Theft Task Force  
Motor Vehicle Recoveries  
1993-2003**



\*The 1993 data covers the period from December 1992 to December 1993.

Source: NEMAT monthly data reports

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## Funding Summary

The Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Act, which 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.”<sup>5</sup>

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 the problem of 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 Northeast Metro Auto Theft Task Force (NEMAT). Table 1 lists the amount granted to and expended by the task force for each program year. The increase in funding since 2000 is a result of an expansion of the task force’s service area as well as an extension of the auto theft investigation training program from 90 days to 120 days.

**Table 1**  
Northeast Metro Auto Theft Task Force (NEMAT)  
Funding by Program Year

<b>Year</b>	<b>Grant Amount</b>	<b>Expenditures</b>
1993	\$507,210	\$427,399
1994	\$521,545	\$404,768
1995	\$502,284	\$406,231
1996	\$474,973	\$342,348
1997	\$480,405	\$284,210
1998	\$396,820	\$272,641
1999	\$473,491	\$434,885
2000	\$825,866	\$609,246
2001	\$803,800	\$491,494
2002	\$848,216	\$557,708
2003	\$824,044	\$497,562
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$6,658,654</b>	<b>\$4,728,492</b>

\* The 1993 data covers the period from November 1992 to October 1993.

\*\*The 1994 data covers the period from November 1993 to December 1994.

Note: Unexpended grant funds are returned to the Council.

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<sup>5</sup> Chapter 20 Illinois Compiled Statutes 4005/2

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Figure 4 summarizes NEMAT'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.

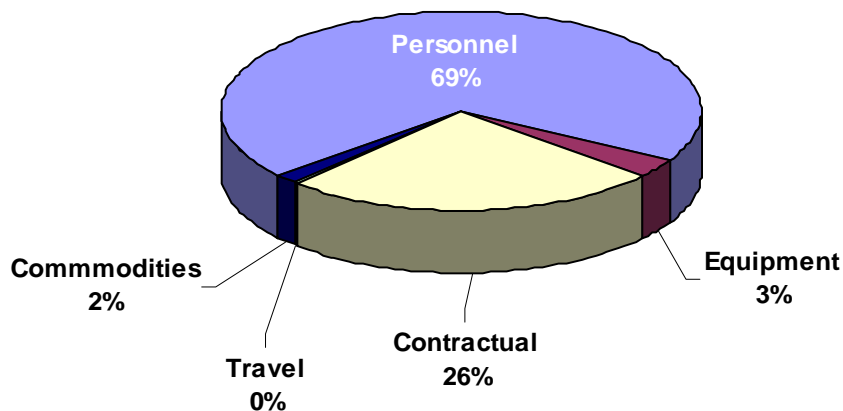
**Travel**—includes lodging, food, and transportation expenses incurred by program staff while conducting official program-related business.

**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**

**Northeast Metro Auto Theft Task Force**  
Percentage of Expenditures by Category  
1993-2001



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

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## Conclusion

Since the Northeast Metro Auto Theft Task Force began operation, vehicle thefts have declined within the task force's jurisdiction. From 1992 to 2003, motor vehicle thefts in Cook County decreased 47 percent, from 58,238 to 30,661. It is important to note that in the program's 2002 profile, the City of Chicago was not included in the task force's service area.

The FBI estimates that the average value of a vehicle stolen in the United States in 2002 was \$6,701.<sup>6</sup> Based on this figure, the decrease in auto thefts in Cook County amounts to a saving of \$185 million.

NEMAT has received a total of \$6.7 million in funding from the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Trust Fund, and has recovered an estimated \$40 million in stolen vehicles. Combining the recovery value with the savings from reduced auto theft, the task force has produced a 'return rate' of more than \$33 for every \$1 of funding.

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<sup>6</sup> This is the most recent estimate available. *Crime in the United States – 2002: Uniform Crime Reports*. Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2004.



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