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NEWS RELEASE

June 8, 2017
www.nicb.org

NICB's 2016 Hot Spots Vehicle Theft Report

Anchorage, AK and Billings, MT Metro Areas Make First-Time Appearance in Top 10

DES PLAINES, Ill.—The Albuquerque, N.M. metropolitan statistical area (MSA) had the highest per capita auto theft rate in 2016 according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau's (NICB) latest *Hot Spots* report.

Hot Spots examines vehicle theft data obtained from the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) for each of the nation's MSAs. MSAs are designated by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and often include areas much larger than the cities for which they are named. For example, this year's number one spot, the Albuquerque, N.M. MSA, includes all thefts within the entire *county* of Bernalillo, not just the city of Albuquerque.

After rising to number two on the *Hot Spots* list last year, Albuquerque was chosen as the site of NICB's annual insurance fraud and vehicle theft summit in the fall. Local and state authorities gathered to discuss the growing vehicle theft problem and address efforts to combat the problem in 2017. NICB recently ran billboard messages in the city aimed at reducing the theft rate.

New to the top 10 this year, the metro areas of Anchorage, Alaska (No. 6) and Billings, Mont. (No. 10). As a population-based survey, an area with a much smaller population and a moderate number of thefts can—and often does—have a higher theft rate than an area with a much more significant vehicle theft problem *and* a larger population to absorb it. Which is how Billings, with 877 thefts, places 10th while Los Angeles, with 60,670 thefts places 35th.

For 2016, the 10 MSAs with the highest vehicle theft rates were: (thefts in parentheses)

2016 Ranking

1. Albuquerque, N.M.	(10,011)
2. Pueblo, Colo.	(1,325)
3. Bakersfield, Calif.	(7,176)
4. Modesto, Calif.	(3,820)
5. Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, Calif.	(25,708)

2015 Ranking

2	(6,657)
7	(983)
3	(6,000)
1	(4,072)
9	(25,001)

6. Anchorage, Alaska	(2,273)	47	(1,359)
7. Merced, Calif.	(1,605)	21	(1,132)
8. San Francisco-Oakland -Hayward, Calif.	(29,414)	5	(30,554)
9. Fresno, Calif.	(5,682)	13	(5,149)
10. Billings, Mont.	(877)	21	(775)

Each year the FBI releases preliminary Uniform Crime Report (UCR) data for the previous year's January–June time frame. When the preliminary 2016 crime data was released earlier this year, vehicle theft was up 6.6 percent across the nation. That increase is reflected in today's Hot Spots report and is expected to hold when the final UCR 2016 crime data is published in the fall.

For comparison, below is a table showing the preliminary UCR vehicle theft data, the percent change from the previous year, and the final UCR vehicle theft figure:

Year	Preliminary UCR % change	Final UCR vehicle theft total
2016	+6.6	
2015	+1.0	707,758
2014	-5.7	689,527
2013	-3.2	699,594
2012	+1.7	721,053
2011	-5.0	715,373
2010	-7.2	737,142
2009	-17.2	795,652
2008	-13.1	958,629
2007	-7.4	1,095,769

Overall, vehicle theft is down, dramatically, across the nation. The historic peak year for vehicle theft was 1991, with 1,661,738 reported thefts. In 2015, the total was 707,758. That is a 57.4 percent reduction since 1991.

While the final result for 2016 is expected to be higher than 2015's number, the vehicle theft environment across the country is vastly improved from the 1990s.

But it could be much better if vehicle owners just followed simple security advice.

In a [report published last October](#), NICB found that for the years 2013 through 2015, a total of 147,434 vehicles were reported stolen with the keys left in them—57,096 in 2015 alone. With the debut of “smart keys” in 1997 and all of the improved anti-theft technology since, it is worthless if drivers continue to leave their keys in the car or leave their vehicles running, unattended, while they make a quick stop at a convenience store.

Vehicle manufacturers, law enforcement and legislatures have been responsive to the crime of vehicle theft over the years and the results are evident. Vehicle owners must guard against complacency and remember to heed simple tips to safeguard their vehicles.

The full *Hot Spots* report is available at www.nicb.org. See the *Hot Spots* video [here](#).

NICB recommends that drivers follow our four "[layers of protection](#)" to guard against vehicle theft:

Common Sense — the common sense approach to protection is the easiest and most cost-effective way to thwart would-be thieves. You should always:

- Remove your keys from the ignition
- Lock your doors /close your windows
- Park in a well-lit area

Warning Device — the second layer of protection is a visible or audible device which alerts thieves that your vehicle is protected. Popular devices include:

- Audible alarms
- Steering column collars
- Steering wheel/brake pedal lock
- Brake locks
- Wheel locks
- Theft deterrent decals
- Identification markers in or on vehicle
- VIN etching
- Micro dot marking

Immobilizing Device — the third layer of protection is a device which prevents thieves from bypassing your ignition and hot-wiring the vehicle. Some electronic devices have computer chips in ignition keys. Other devices inhibit the flow of electricity or fuel to the engine until a hidden switch or button is activated. Some examples are:

- Smart keys
- Fuse cut-offs
- Kill switches
- Starter, ignition, and fuel pump disablers
- Wireless ignition authentication

Tracking Device — the final layer of protection is a tracking device which emits a signal to police or a monitoring station when the vehicle is stolen. Tracking devices are very effective in helping authorities recover stolen vehicles. Some systems employ "telematics" which combine GPS and wireless technologies to allow remote monitoring of a vehicle. If the

vehicle is moved, the system will alert the owner and the vehicle can be tracked via computer.

Anyone with information concerning insurance fraud or vehicle theft can report it anonymously by calling toll-free 800-TEL-NICB (800-835-6422), texting keyword "fraud" to TIP411 (847411) or submitting a [form](#) on our website. Or, download the [NICB Fraud Tips app](#) on your iPhone or Android device.

About the National Insurance Crime Bureau:

Headquartered in Des Plaines, Ill., the NICB is the nation's leading not-for-profit organization exclusively dedicated to preventing, detecting and defeating

insurance fraud and vehicle theft through data analytics, investigations, training, legislative advocacy and public awareness. The NICB is supported by more than 1,100 property and casualty insurance companies and self-insured organizations. NICB member companies wrote over \$436 billion in insurance premiums in 2016, or more than 79 percent of the nation's property/casualty insurance. That includes more than 94 percent (\$202 billion) of the nation's personal auto insurance. To learn more visit www.nicb.org.

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