

TECHNOLOGY IN OUR LIVES

Police Use Satellite Technology To Fight Rising Auto Theft ㊟

(NAPSA)—Vehicle thefts are on the rise after eight straight years of steady declines in the '90s, and police forces are finding it difficult to keep up with the increase. In fact, motor vehicle thefts rose 4.2 percent in the first six months of 2002 compared to 2001, according to last year's FBI Uniform Crime Report. Each year, the total value of all stolen vehicles is estimated at nearly \$8 billion.

The post-September 11 redeployment of law enforcement from auto theft task forces has made it essential for consumers to take active measures to prevent their vehicles from being stolen, according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau, a not-for-profit organization that fights insurance fraud and theft. Likewise, police agencies nationwide are looking for new options to help crack down on this growing trend.

Satellite technology is one of the latest tools helping police locate stolen vehicles. Automobiles equipped with in-vehicle safety and security systems can be located even when moving. The OnStar system, found on many General Motors vehicles and a growing number of other automotive manufacturers' products, uses the Global Positioning System (GPS) and wireless technology to respond to approximately 500 stolen vehicle reports a month. OnStar advisors work closely with police dispatchers,

passing along critical information to help guide authorities to the location of a stolen vehicle.

Oscar Salazar knows firsthand what it's like to have an automobile stolen. When his 2002 Chevrolet TrailBlazer was stolen from his home, Salazar called OnStar. After verifying the report with local police, OnStar advisor Michael Evans used the vehicle's embedded GPS system to pinpoint its location. As units closed in on the vehicle, the suspects fled,

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leading police through several towns. The OnStar advisor stayed on the line with the police dispatcher and provided updates on the SUV's location as it moved from town to town. After a lengthy pursuit, police cornered the vehicle and apprehended four suspects.

"With devices like these we're able to know the exact location of a vehicle soon after it has been reported stolen. We're then able to move in quickly to recover the vehicle and hopefully apprehend the perpetrator," says Lt. Craig McGuire, from the St. Charles County Sheriff's Department in Missouri. "These systems give us more options in locating stolen vehicles."