

EMPTY CAR AUTO THEFT REDUCTION PROJECT (ECAT)

1. Statement of problem

Theft of vehicles and theft from vehicles in parking lots.

More requests for police visibility and presence than possible to accommodate.

2. Identify target group

Parking areas shown by Crime Analysis to have a high rate of theft.

Any location where an increased police presence may be helpful in preventing crime.

3. Goals and objectives

To create “high visibility” presence by having Police Volunteers park empty marked patrol vehicles in areas designated by Crime Analysis or Victim Assistance.

To reduce auto theft and theft from vehicles.

4. Methods of implementation

Two marked patrol vehicles with light bars that were due to be decommissioned were instead stripped of inside equipment and assigned to this program. Volunteers were selected and trained to place these cars in areas designated by Crime Analysis as high auto theft areas or by Victim Assistance in areas that had requested “extra patrol” type assistance. Volunteers attempt to move the cars as often as possible, as leaving the cars stationary for a long period of time may tend to compromise the situation.

5. Measurements

On a weekly basis Crime Analysis prepares a report of high auto theft areas and suggested areas for deployment. On a monthly basis, a report is prepared stating the total amount of deployments, the number of volunteers serving in the program and the number of volunteer hours served. Weekly auto theft numbers are also compiled and charted.

6. Critical issues

Volunteer screening, training and supervision

Program confidentiality – success depends on the least amount of members of the general public knowing about it

Communication between all involved regarding where vehicle is located and where it is to go

Communication with patrol officers so they don't believe they have "back up" or a true police presence in the area

Communication with property owners, if deployed on private property.

7. Length of time in effect – one year

8. Resources committed or necessary

Staff time to select, train, schedule and supervise volunteers – scheduling and training can be delegated to a responsible "lead" volunteer overseen by paid staff

Crime analysis assistance

Marked police vehicles dedicated to the program

Volunteer recognition/appreciation

9. Summary of impact or success

Although conceived to address high auto theft rates, the deterrence effect is difficult to quantify as with any prevention program. Although there have been peaks and valleys in the auto theft statistics that seem to correspond to ECAT deployment, there are other factors that can contribute to crime statistics on any given day that prevent the program from taking full credit for crime statistics. It has been noted that there has been no known auto thefts at the time and place ECAT vehicles have been deployed.

The ECAT vehicles have been deployed on the average of 80 times per month since the program inception. There are usually about 10 volunteers serving in this program, with approximately 50-60 volunteer hours dedicated to this program per month.

There is an abundance of anecdotal evidence regarding how much the program is appreciated by private property owners (apartment complexes, businesses, etc.). Also impossible to quantify is the amount of crimes that may have been prevented by a possible offender entering a parking lot, seeing the marked vehicle, and leaving. There has also been a community relations benefit to those deployments made at the request of Victim Assistance. It may be parking at banks during a rash of bank robberies or a neighborhood that, if time permitted, would like extra patrol or an officer staying in their neighborhood. Since this is not possible, we can put an ECAT car there. The neighborhood is not deceived, they know it is empty, but they are appreciative.

Volunteers have told stories of people begging them to leave the police car there when they have come to pick it up, because people truly feel it makes a difference, giving a “peace of mind” effect. Business owners have reported to volunteers that they believe there is less shoplifting when the vehicle is parked nearby. Some businesses have provided designated parking spots “for police vehicles” for the ECAT vehicle to park in.

ECAT Procedure Checklist

Pick up current hot sheet from ECAT mailbox

At ECAT desk,

- sign in on timesheet
- put new hot sheet in ECAT book and shred any old copies
- check that 4 keys are in book
- review log for locations of ECAT cars – take logbook into field
- turn on and issue police radio to ECAT driver (8W99)
- issue FRS radios to each crew member

Use vehicle 903 (speed watch van) for “chase” car if available (8W98)

If 903 is not available, carefully select another vehicle not in use

- check cars assigned to patrol shifts not on duty
- review duty roster in briefing room
- review unit roster on CAD (see instruction sheet)
- coordinate with maintenance volunteers
- obtain key from key board and place magnetic ECAT marker on vehicle status board
- selected vehicle will use callsign 8W97

Log in to CAD (see instruction sheet)

Fill in time, date, callsigns, etc. on logsheet

Proceed to the first ECAT location and move all the cars

While in the field, police radio is to be monitored for situation awareness in both vehicles

- use police radio to call in emergencies
- use FRS radios to coordinate car to car

Use the hot sheet to check for stolen vehicles along your route

As each ECAT car is relocated, fill in the log sheet accurately and completely

Other duties

- car wash
- fuel vehicles

On return to station

- log off CAD (see instruction sheet)
- check logbook for all keys, check log sheet for completeness, be sure gas card returned
- remove magnetic marker from vehicle status board and return key to key board if applicable
- turn off radios and return to chargers
- if done with duties, log out on time sheet

Unit Designators for ECAT

Volunteer using portable will log in as **8W99**

Speedwatch van (if used) logs in as **8W98**

Any other vehicle used logs in as **8W97**

Logon/logoff Procedure using CAD

To obtain a command line on the screen: **alt F6**

To clear contents of command line: **F7**

Example logon: type **L 8W97** and enter the command by pressing the **+** key on the numeric keypad

Example logoff: use the command **LO 8W97**

Note: if CAD accepts the command a message will be displayed at the bottom of the CAD screen

Useful CAD Screens

Command **UR W1** displays unit roster showing all units logged on – can use to determine cars in use.

To display Incident History screen,
alt F6 to get command mode, then **alt F1**
Enter **WPnnn** where nnn is the incident number to display

Telephone contacts

Emergency **911**

Radio **253 372-1439** (Valleycom FWRPD dispatcher)

Valleycom non-emergency **253 852-2121**

Lt Norman **206 510-5005** cellular

Don't forget to log off CAD when your ECAT shift is completed!!