

SAN DIEGO POLICE DEPARTMENT PROCEDURE

DATE: June 24, 2015

NUMBER: 6.13 - PATROL

SUBJECT: AUTO THEFT PROCEDURES

RELATED POLICY: N/A

ORIGINATING DIVISION: AUTO THEFT

NEW PROCEDURE:

PROCEDURAL CHANGE:

SUPERSEDES: DP 6.13 – 12/11/2012

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I. PURPOSE

This Department procedure establishes guidelines for the taking of vehicle theft and recovery reports.

II. SCOPE

This procedure applies to all members of the Department.

III. PROCEDURES

- A. The Communications Division usually receives initial notice concerning a possible stolen vehicle. Before formatting for dispatch or the Telephone Report Unit (TRU), the following procedures will be followed:
 1. The complainant making the report must have had legal possession of the vehicle immediately prior to the theft.
 2. The vehicle must have been stolen within the City limits of San Diego.
 3. Vehicles reported stolen from military installations will be handled by military investigation units.

4. The impound file must be searched to ascertain if the vehicle has been impounded or repossessed.
 5. The complainant must be questioned as to the possibility of the vehicle being used by a friend or relative without the permission or knowledge of the complainant.
 6. The complainant must also be questioned as to whether he or she rented or leased the vehicle, and the lessee failed to return it at the agreed upon time. In these cases, the complainant will have to consult an auto theft investigator before a stolen report is taken.
 7. If the complainant loaned the vehicle to another person, he or she shall be directed to contact an auto theft investigator before a stolen report is taken.
 8. The act of loaning a vehicle, or entrusting it to another for repair/service, or a test drive, involves the giving of a limited consent to another to possess and/or use that vehicle. If that party fails to return the vehicle to the owner, they have exceeded the scope of that limited consent and are in possession of the vehicle without consent in violation of Section 10851 CVC. The owner of the vehicle shall be referred to an auto theft investigator before a stolen report is taken.
- B. A unit will be dispatched to obtain a signed auto theft report if, after going through the above procedures:
1. It appears that the vehicle has been stolen;
 2. The crime has just occurred;
 3. The suspect is known;
 4. There is sufficient suspect information; or,
 5. When proof of ownership needs to be verified.
- C. In most other instances, during the TRU's operational hours, 0700-2200, an officer will call the victim back and take the report over the phone. During TRU's non-operational hours, the call will be dispatched to a field officer to take the report over the phone. The unit will be given a full description of the vehicle on the air so that other units will be aware of it. The only exceptions to this policy will apply to area commands that have implemented a dispatch policy for auto theft reports.

D. Vehicle Identification Numbers

1. When taking information for the stolen report, it is imperative that the correct Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) be used.
2. All American automobiles manufactured in 1955, and thereafter, are identified by the VIN, which is usually located on the door post.
3. Beginning with 1968 models, the VIN is located on the dashboard, visible through the windshield.
4. Motorcycles are identified by the frame number. Do not use engine numbers for identification of most motorcycles. The engine number identifies Harley Davidson motorcycles built prior to 1970. Beginning with the 1970 models, Harley Davidson motorcycles are also identified by the frame number.
5. Whenever a citizen contacts any Department Member and requests a VIN verification, that citizen should be referred to the Auto Theft Unit at headquarters or to the Southern Division Auto Theft team. Detectives assigned to Auto Theft have access to specialized databases, allowing them to research the history of a vehicle. All other personnel should refrain from conducting VIN verifications in the field or at front counters.

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E. Construction Vehicles

1. All reported thefts of heavy-duty commercial industrial type wheeled or tracked construction equipment will be reported on an auto theft report.
2. Officers will write "CONSTRUCTION VEHICLE" at the top of the auto theft report. All other auto theft procedures will be followed.
3. The identification number of the vehicle and the license plate number, if available, should be placed in the appropriate boxes on the auto theft report.
4. If there are no identification numbers, officers will still take the report on an auto theft case following the "Incident Only Report" procedures outlined in this procedure.
5. Every effort should be made to find an identification number.
6. The construction equipment covered by this procedure includes: backhoes, tractors, cranes, dozers, forklifts, generators, compressors, loaders, rollers, trenchers, scrapers, and any other items on wheels or tracks.

7. Smaller construction equipment shall continue to be reported on theft forms and routed to the respective commands.

F. Boats and Personal Watercraft

1. The CF number on a boat is its California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) license plate. For other states, the first two letters (such as AZ for Arizona) will be its DMV license plate. The hull identification number (HIN) is the same as a VIN on a motor vehicle.
2. Thefts of any type of boat will be reported on an auto theft report as follows:
 - a. Boat trailers will be on a separate auto theft report;
 - b. Officers will write "BOAT" at the top of the auto theft report;
 - c. Officers will place hull numbers and CF numbers in the appropriate boxes on the auto theft report;
 - d. If there are no identification numbers, officers will still take the report on an auto theft case following the "Incident Only Report" procedures outlined in this procedure; and,
 - e. All other auto theft procedures will be followed.
3. Full identification (including serial numbers) of outboard motors, electronics, and other removable items will be listed on the report.

G. Cargo Thefts

1. If an officer is assigned to take a report involving a cargo theft, separate vehicle theft reports for the tractor and for the trailer are required or, in the case of a double trailer, a report shall be taken for each trailer. Officers shall list the contents of the trailer (the cargo) on a separate ARJIS-2 crime report. Each of these reports requires a separate case number. A copy of the ARJIS-2 crime report shall be included with the auto theft report(s).
2. If the driver of a tractor trailer does not know the license plate or VIN of the trailer, officers should not accept a company trailer identification number as a replacement for the VIN. If the identification numbers are unknown, officers will still take the report on an auto theft case following the "Incident Only Report" procedures outlined in this procedure.

IV. REPORTS

- A. If a field unit is dispatched, they will fill out the stolen report and have the complainant sign all copies.
1. Officers will do their utmost to obtain all the information, especially the Vehicle Identification Number.
 2. Once the report has been completed by the field unit or TRU, they will call Teletype at **Redacted – Records of Security** to obtain a case number, which will be recorded on the stolen report.
 3. If the victim is reporting other property stolen that was inside the vehicle (i.e. cell phones or other valuables), the reporting officer shall complete an additional property form (ARJIS-4) and attach it to the report. Officers shall not list additional property in the narrative of the auto theft report (ARJIS-11).
 4. If the victim is reporting that a firearm was inside the vehicle, the reporting officer shall complete a separate crime report documenting the theft of the firearm. The officer shall also notify teletype of that information when they obtain a case number for the stolen vehicle, so a caution can be added to the auto theft entry for officer safety purposes.
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- B. When a reporting party lacks necessary information (i.e. VIN, License Plate Number, etc.), officers are to take a report on an auto theft case and handle as an “Incident Only Report.” The reporting officer will:
1. Complete an ARJIS-11, writing “ZZ981153” above the space designated for the case number. This will designate the report as an Incident Only Report and no information will be entered in the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS);
 2. Process a completed auto theft report; and,
 3. Forward the original report to the Auto Theft Unit.

An Auto Theft detective will obtain the missing information. They must provide Teletype with this information so that an entry may be made in CLETS.

V. RECOVERIES

- A. Field Unit Recovery

1. A field unit that recovers a stolen vehicle will notify Communications Division of that fact and will advise the location of the vehicle and if it is drivable.
2. The field unit will complete a recovery report.
3. If the vehicle is drivable and the complainant is able to arrive at the field unit's location within a reasonable period of time (usually 15 to 20 minutes), the officer will request that Communications Division have the person meet the field unit at the recovery location.
4. The vehicle will be turned over to the complainant after the person has signed the recovery report.
5. If the complainant is not available or the vehicle is not drivable, the vehicle will be impounded. The impounding officer shall note the name of the tow company and the address of the specific tow yard where the vehicle will be stored.
6. Do not place a "Hold for Auto Theft" on a recovered stolen vehicle unless circumstances or evidence indicate the vehicle has been involved in additional crimes (i.e., sex crimes, robbery, etc.). If necessary, contact an on-call Auto Theft investigator for clarification. If a hold is placed on a vehicle, it is the impounding officer's responsibility to notify the Auto Theft Unit.
7. Do not place a hold for Regional Auto Theft Task Force (RATT) on a recovered stolen vehicle unless specifically requested to do so. Officers and supervisors who become involved in a complex auto theft investigation should not contact RATT for assistance. They should contact the on-call Auto Theft investigator, via the Watch Commander's Office. If further assistance or expertise is required, the Auto Theft investigator will make the appropriate notifications to the RATT Unit.
8. If a vehicle is recovered and the engine is missing, the impounding officer shall indicate in the report narrative that the engine has been removed, in addition to checking the box indicating "Eng/Trans Strip." This will alert the auto theft detective who will then be required to re-enter the engine number (if applicable) into the Stolen Vehicle System as a "Stolen Vehicle Component."
9. The engines in most manufacturers' vehicles are given serial numbers. Generally, these individual engine numbers are referenced to the VIN at the time of manufacturer. If a vehicle is recovered and the engine has been removed, the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) can be

contacted to determine if the engine number is on file for that particular VIN/vehicle. **Redacted – Records of Security.**

10. The field unit will immediately notify Teletype at **Redacted – Records of Security** of the recovery, disposition, and condition (specific details must be provided) of the vehicle.
 - a. If the vehicle is impounded, the Records Division Impound Desk will notify the complainant of the location where the vehicle was taken.
 - b. If there is a "hold" for a specific investigative unit, a release must be obtained from that investigative unit.

B. Recovery by Complainant

1. If the complainant recovers their own vehicle, the Communications Division will dispatch a field unit to have the complainant sign the recovery report.
2. The field unit will immediately notify Teletype at **Redacted – Records of Security** of the recovery, disposition, and condition of the vehicle.
3. Once a case number has been assigned to a stolen vehicle report, a field unit must obtain a signed recovery report
4. If there is a "hold" for a specific investigative unit, a release must be obtained from that investigative unit prior to release.

- C. Whenever an officer arrests a suspect for auto theft, it shall be the arresting officer's responsibility to ensure that all related reports are faxed to the Auto Theft Unit no later than the end of the officer's shift to facilitate processing of the DA package in a timely manner.
- D. The above procedures also apply to the recovery of a boat, watercraft, or a wheeled or tracked construction vehicle.