

MAY 2010

SOUTH AFRICAN INSURANCE CRIME BUREAU

ISSUE 5 : 2010

**IN BRIEF....**

**DRÄGER**

Hits :208  
Records:1068  
Number of lists: 11

**SAPS 13**

Hits: 17  
Records: 332  
Numbers of lists: 5

**TRACKER**

Hits: 38  
Records: 456  
Number of lists: 13

**DATADOT**

Hits: 136  
Records: 136  
Number of list: 4

**ENQUIRIES**

Enquiries: 119  
Replies: 90

**APPROX, R6,8 MILLION  
SAVED BY INDUSTRY  
TO DATE**

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## SAICB UPDATE

### SAICB UPDATE

As reported in last months issue the SAICB has become involved in several initiatives to enhance the service we provide for our member companies and the industry.

#### CROSS BORDER TRAINING

The training of the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) on vehicle identification that took place in May went incredibly well, with the SAICB being invited back to provide additional training for the Magistrates and State Prosecutors in Lesotho as well. Several other very positive decisions and collaborations were initiated, and are in the planning stages. Further information on these initiatives will be addressed in future issues as the planning is completed.

An exciting development on 26 May 2010 was the first identification by the LMPS of a data dotted vehicle in their pounds. The vehicle was identified as hijacked and the information was sent to the industry for action. The training is already beginning to bear fruits and we hope to see further recoveries in Lesotho.

The South African border police training is ongoing and also very successful. The training will continue until August 2010 when a full report will be forwarded to the industry. Having direct contact with representatives from the industry has been welcomed by the officers and the laminated A3 members details poster has proven to be very popular. The SAICB also supplied details for the bank vehicle finance houses so that the border police can contact them directly as well.

#### CLONED VEHICLES INITIATIVE

The cloned vehicles initiative is now being implemented with the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the initial impression is that the problem is a lot bigger than anticipated. This will be an ongoing project as the police report that approximately 52% of the approximately 100 000 vehicles stolen annually “resurface” on E-Natis as cloned vehicles using the identity of written off accident or imported vehicles. Information on the cloned vehicles is being sent to the industry on a regular basis for action.

## FRAUDLINE

In April 2010, **165** reports were received of which 10 reports were for the short term insurance industry, no reports were received for Brokers and 3 reports for the life industry.

Since 2002, **26278** reports have been received of which **834** reports were for the short term industry **125** reports for the brokers and **333** reports were for the life industry.

For further information on the statistics, please contact

Melanie Pillay on [melaniep@saicb.co.za](mailto:melaniep@saicb.co.za)



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## MEMBERS

SANTAM  
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 ZURICH  
 LION OF AFRICA  
 REGENT  
 TELESURE  
 ABSA INSURANCE  
 STANDARD BANK  
 INSURANCE  
 OUTSURANCE  
 MOMENTUM  
 MIWAY

## PARTNERS

SOUTH AFRICAN  
 INSURANCE  
 ASSOCIATION (SAIA)  
 TRANSUNION  
 FRAUDLINE  
 MEMEX  
 SAFPS  
 UNICODE  
 BACSA  
 NEWORDER  
 DATADOT  
 CGC

## SAICB UPDATE CONT...

### TRAINING

The SAICB has recognized and discussed a need for additional training for our Special Point of Contact (SPOC), with the SAICB Board, and will be arranging special training sessions and presentations with representatives covering issues like statement writing, etc. The first session is scheduled for 3 June 2010. The invitations for the training sessions has been sent to both the Board and SPOC's to nominate people to attend. The SAICB would like to thank the SAPS for providing trainers for this initiative as well.

### FRAUDLINE

The Fraudline rollout begins in June 2010 and the staff dishonesty database is also ready for roll out to member companies with appointments being set up for the HR, Forensic and Marketing departments currently.

### KZN DRÄGER / POUNDS

The SAICB was involved in talks with the KwaZulu Natal (KZN) Dräger centers in May and the Dräger lists from KZN will now be sent to the SAICB for distribution. The first list has already been received and was sent to the industry for action. The SAICB has donated two laptops to the Pietermaritzburg and Umhloti testing centers to help facilitate the process of getting the information to us faster.

The SAICB also discussed the vehicles currently in the Isipingo pound with the relevant SAPS representatives, to see if we can assist with the identification of the almost 4000—7000 vehicle that are impounded there. The Isipingo pound handles stolen/recovered, accident and Government vehicles for 8 Clusters consisting of 55 police stations.

A comprehensive list of all the vehicles in the pounds is being compiled to be sent to the SAICB, which will be run through the Memex system and sent to the industry for action. A great deal of planning still needs to be done on this project and progress will be reported on once the project is up and running and the planning finalised.

The SAICB currently has 15 Cases under active investigation with three cases in court, two cases with the State Prosecution for warrants, and two cases have been registered as projects with the SAPS. Full details on the cases will appear in future issues, but only once they are finalized. 🐾

## ARTICLE— SAICB MISSION STATEMENT

### SAICB MISSION STATEMENT

The SAICB Board has approved the SAICB Mission Statement as follows:

**“To confront and address the ever increasing problem of syndicated and multi company insurance fraud in the insurance industry through the detection, prevention, investigation and prosecution of fraudulent insurance acts, while promoting and coordinating the effort within the industry to combat insurance fraud and crime.”** 🐾

## ARTICLE— SAIA BACSA DONATION

### SAIA DONATES OVER R1.7 MILLION TO COMBAT CRIME

The South African Insurance Association (SAIA), on behalf of its members donated over R 1.7 million to Business Against Crime South Africa (BACSA) and handed over the symbolic cheque at a function in Illovo on 11 May 2010.

‘Our industry has, since 2002 donated over R10 million towards BACSA’s crime-combating activities and we remain committed to contributing towards improving the crime situation in our country to ensure a sustainable and successful future for all,’ said Ronnie Napier, Chairperson of the SAIA Board.

Mr Napier, in handing over the contribution to BACSA said that the funds, as approved by the SAIA Board for an eighth consecutive year, would assist BACSA with trio crime-combating activities in conjunction with the relevant authorities and partners.

Mr Napier reported that through the continuous efforts of the industry working with partners such as BACSA and the South African Police Services (SAPS) that motor vehicle crime had reduced since 2002 by 50%. He further stressed that ‘while incidences of vehicle theft had greatly reduced over the years, there was no room for complacency concerning crime.’

Mr Napier highlighted that in previous years support to BACSA had focused on combating motor-vehicle crime. However, now that such crimes were no longer the most pressing priority for the short-term insurance industry, SAIA was for the first time making a contribution that was borne by all of its members, rather than “only by SAIA’s motor insurance members”.

‘Motor insurance remained the largest class of business for the industry and the high cost of claims related to the issue of road safety was becoming increasingly problematic for many members within the short-term insurance industry’, said Napier.

‘As about 70% of insurance claims were road-accident related, the Association had adopted a strategy to address the causes of claims, while also maintaining a focus on crime-combating’, said Napier.

Dr Graham Wright, CEO of BACSA, concurred with Mr Napier that the initiatives undertaken to prevent crime could serve as a springboard for efforts aimed at reducing the high accident rates. “We believe that systemic improvements are necessary, in addition to addressing the culture of non-compliance in South Africa”, said Dr Wright.

Dr Wright stressed the importance of partnerships in combating crime and building a responsible citizenry. He stressed that all had a role to play as the police and the relevant Government agencies could not do it alone. Successes had been experienced and some of the trio crimes appeared to be stabilising.

Dr Wright attributed this to the leadership within the Department of Police to address crime with renewed vigour and determination. Other success factors included a business sector focused on information-sharing and doing what it could to ‘put its own house in order’.

Dr Wright thanked SAIA for its contribution as a good corporate citizen that recognised that the fight against crime needed a holistic response to sustain current gains.

‘BACSA was committed to working closely with Government and business partners at this time of renewal, re-commitment and action to progressively realise the shared vision of a South Africa in which people both were safe and *felt* safe’, said Dr Wright.

SAIA was thanked for being a stalwart and important partner in the fight against crime. 🇿🇦

**THANK YOU TO ADELE JOUBERT FROM SAIA FOR PERMISSION TO USE THIS MEDIA RELEASE. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT ADELE ON [adele@saia.co.za](mailto:adele@saia.co.za)**

## ARTICLE— VEHICLE CRIME

### VEHICLE CRIME – ILLEGAL TRADE IN STOLEN VEHICLE PARTS

Chop-shops are places where stolen cars are disassembled and sold, piece-by-piece, to auto repair and body shops in disrepute. Once separated from the chassis, many vehicle parts no longer carry Vehicle Identification Numbers (VINs) and cannot be identified and traced. As vehicles age, parts often grow more valuable because they become more difficult to come by and most chop-shop operators make two to four times a vehicle's actual worth by selling off its parts separately.

In 2005 there were allegations of unscrupulous criminals increasingly using children in chop-shops to strip stolen or hijacked vehicles. In September 2005 Gareth Crocker, the communications manager at Tracker, said that when chop shops were raided by the police, they had found that between 15 - 20% of the labour force were children under the age of 16, who were usually orphans or runaways.

The practical reason for using children is that their small hands are suited for stripping cars. It's easier for them to get into door panels, the engine area and other hard-to-reach places. Another reason could be that the criminals owning the chop-shop know that if and when the police swoop, children will take the fall and carry all the risk. If caught, they will only go to juvenile detention for a few years, while the syndicate leaders remain untouched. At that stage children were paid between R20 and R50 a day.

On 2 November 2009 Primedia's Crime Line launched its "chop-shops initiative" aimed at zooming in on different types of crimes every two weeks. That week's chop-shops focus was on where stolen and hijacked vehicles were taken. Yusuf Abramjee, Head of Crime Line explained that the chop-shops idea was initiated when police had made a breakthrough after following up on a tip-off. They raided a chop-shop in Soshanguve at the end of October 2009 and vehicles to the value of R2 million were recovered. The police caught the men red-handed while they were punching new engine numbers using stencils. Mr Abramjee said that hopefully people will start thinking critically about suspicious behaviour relating to chop shops. Within a few days after the initiatives had been launched Crime Line received a number of credible SMS tip-offs regarding chop-shops, which the police followed up.

Chop shops cost vehicle manufacturers hundreds of millions of Rands per annum through lost parts sales.

### POLICE CRACK DOWN ON CHOP SHOPS

In August 2009 the Mthatha police followed up on intelligence and retrieved three Isuzu bakkies, two Nissan I400s and two Toyota Cressidas which were believed to have been stolen from Gauteng, the Eastern Cape and the Southern Cape. One man was arrested in the chop-shop. Vehicle parts were also found inside the chop-shop which the police believe were linked to a nationwide syndicate.

### WRECK MANAGEMENT

The integrity of the process in which vehicles are deregistered as permanently unfit for use (code 3), permanently demolished (code 4) or stolen is important to fight vehicle related crime and to improve road safety. One of the most prominent ways of re-registering illegal motor vehicles (rebirth of the motor vehicle) is to use records of motor vehicles that have not been deregistered properly. However, many vehicles, especially those that are permanently unfit for use (code 3) and permanently demolished (code 4) are not deregistered. This is mainly due to that fact that code 3 and code 4 vehicles are worthless when sold. It is also true that the deregistration of motor vehicles which are safely repairable results in significant commercial losses to the insurance industry. The deregistration of motor vehicles and the vehicle life cycle status have been controversial points of discussion for many years. Historically, it has been a challenge to determine when a motor vehicle is permanently unfit for use. Neither the National Road Traffic Act 93 of 1996 nor the National Traffic Regulations (2000) ade-

## ARTICLE— VEHICLE CRIME *CONT...*

quately defines the category: “permanently unfit for use” (Burgers, 2007).

The use of badly damaged motor vehicles after they have been repaired leads to unsafe motor vehicles on the roads, accidents and death. It is not only a legal requirement to deregister motor vehicles, but all title holders (government, banks, insurers, companies, private people, etc) have a moral responsibility to promote road safety and fight crime.

Business Against Crime South Africa (BACSA) is in the process of examining the wreck environment in order to recommend tighter classificatory controls across the industry to reduce the scope for vehicle and insurance fraud.

The objectives of the wreck management project are to develop a plan to address:

- The need for clarification in relation to the conditions under which a motor vehicle may be deregistered because it is unfit for use and beyond repair.
- The need to provide for a better understanding of the motor vehicle life cycle status, as determined in the National Road Traffic Act 93 of 1996 and the National Road Traffic Regulations (2000).
- The recommendation to make the transference of ownership compulsory, when an insurance company compensates a vehicle claim to the full value of the vehicle.
- The recommendation to design, develop and implement a standard method for the classification of accident-damaged vehicles, in partnership with all role-players and stakeholders.

Some of the project activities include:

- Identifying companies that do not register vehicles in their names and auction companies that sell burnt shell cars.
- Establishing a database for accident-damaged vehicles and all deregistered vehicles.
- Investigating possibilities for scrapping the code 3 category, as it is open to fraud.
- Debating the compulsory microdotting of all stolen and recovered vehicles and write-off salvage.

### POLICING VEHICLE CRIME

Various initiatives and projects are in place to police and help combat vehicle crime of which some will be discussed briefly.

#### AUTOMATED SEARCH FACILITY – STOLEN MOTOR VEHICLE (ASF-SMV) DATABASE

The Interpol General Secretariat developed the Automated Search Facility-Stolen Motor Vehicle (ASF-SMV) database to support police in member countries in the fight against international vehicle theft and trafficking. By the end of December 2008, the database consisted of more than 4.6 million records of reported stolen motor vehicles. Close to 151 countries use the database regularly, of which 122 countries share their national stolen vehicle database records with Interpol. In 2008 more than 31 000 motor vehicles were located worldwide through the ASF-SMV database, 6000 hits fewer than in 2007.

#### PROJECT FORMATRAIN

On an international level, the Interpol General Secretariat has established and is chairing a number of working groups who meet on a regular basis, and have developed numerous projects to address the issue, including Project Formatrain. Formatrain was set up in 2001 with the challenge to design and develop a training model for assessing vehicle crime investigators' professional skills. Project Formatrain is an acronym for FORMATION and TRAINING and assists investigators with information on vehicle and document identification, investigative strategies, techniques and tools, databases, legal preconditions, etc. The aim of the project is to create a standardised training programme to facilitate investigations of international cases of vehicle theft through basic, intermediate and advanced courses; to train the trainers; and to take advantage of Interpol's global network to share expertise. The project group has prepared three manuals: Vehicle Crime Basic Manual (Identification),

## ARTICLE— VEHICLE CRIME *CONT...*

Vehicle Crime Control and Vehicle Crime Investigation. With a view to improve vehicle crime investigators' professional skills, the project group collected sets of questions to test these skills from various countries.

### ASSISTANCE FROM DEALERS

The International Vehicle Crime Unit (IVCU) has regular interaction with Volvo, BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Subaru dealers. When a vehicle is booked for a service the IVCU can test it and if it tests positively as stolen etc, they can question the client when s/he returns to collect the vehicle.

### MICRODOTTING

Microdotting is a form of technology where vehicles are marked with indestructible dots so that they can be easily identified after theft or hijacking. The police often have difficulty in identifying recovered vehicles resulting in owners not claiming their cars. This is because the identification markings such as the VIN numbers have been altered by car thieves.

Microdots can be seen as "DNA" carrying a microscopic 17-digit laser-etched VIN or personal identification number to identify the vehicle. This number is only visible under an ultraviolet light and by using a magnifying lens. Vehicle thieves will never be able to remove all 10 000 dots on the vehicle. Some vehicle manufacturers in South Africa are already applying microdots to their new vehicles as standard procedure. Nissan South Africa, for example, applies this standard to all vehicles leaving the Rosslyn plant. Microdots are different from **tracking devices** in that the latter is used to **recover** a vehicle. In contrast, **microdots** are used to identify vehicles once they are stolen.

It was found that models that are fitted standard with microdots are less desirable for organised criminal groups. It is impossible to hide the original identity of such vehicles due to the effectiveness of microdotting technology.

### TRACKING DEVICES

Tracking devices from various vehicle tracking companies in South Africa have led to successes in cooperation with the SAPS. The public private partnership between SAPS and Tracker has made a significant contribution towards combating vehicle crime in South Africa. Since the Tracker-SAPS partnership has been established in 1996, 8399 criminals were arrested, 47 579 vehicles recovered and hundreds of chop-shops closed.

### TSOHLE-UNICODE SYSTEM

Tsohle-Unicode, known as Unicode at its establishment, created the world's very first vehicle identification product where a vehicle could be identified electronically at speeds of up to 270 km/h. The private sector, individuals who intend buying a vehicle and the SAPS are benefiting from this partnership in the battle against vehicle related crime including fraud. Approximately 35% of short-term insurance losses are due to vehicle theft and hijackings. The Tsohle-Unicode system offers clients online confirmation of matched vehicle theft case details and insurance claims directly from the SAPS systems. The company monitors the SAPS' system and, where recoveries or updates of stolen vehicles have occurred, the client can be notified through online reports. The system has enabled insurance companies to save hundreds of millions of rand in fraud, and in locating vehicles. This information is extremely important to the private sector as it does not only assist in curbing insurance fraud but also helps the insurance companies to locate their vehicles.

### TRANSUNION

Trans-Union Auto Information Solutions runs routine tests for the vehicle industry and financial institutions. This check raises alerts about discrepancies between the vehicle's VIN and engine number (any such discrepancy is often an indication of

## ARTICLE— VEHICLE CRIME *CONT...*

fraudulent activity), as well as the date of manufacture and the vehicle's make, model and colour. It also indicates whether there is any outstanding finance on the vehicle. In addition, the Auto Check can pick up whether a security alert has been placed on the vehicle by its rightful owner - an anti-crime tactic widely used by car rental companies, for example, to prevent rental clients from attempting to sell the rented vehicle to unsuspecting consumers and dealers (Burgers, 2009). Not all dealers have their used vehicles routinely checked in this way, but the general public may approach the company to run a check on a vehicle for a small amount. For more information on this visit their website [www.transunion.co.za](http://www.transunion.co.za)

### WHAT IS A VIN

Traditionally, a vehicle is identified through its Vehicle Identification Number (VIN), and/or chassis number. However, given the illicit market for stolen vehicles and parts, this number is easily filed off and changed. This allows stolen or hijacked vehicles to be relicensed under a new identity, the parts to be sold, or the vehicle to be exported.

The VIN is used for the definitive identification of a motor vehicle. It enables the manufacturer to be identified, the vehicle type, the individual production serial number and, in most cases the year of the vehicle model to be established. The VIN is normally machine-applied to the vehicle during the production process at the manufacturing plant. Tuning companies constitute an exception to this rule as they normally stamp the VIN on by hand, although even in these cases a complete identification is always possible.

Different vehicle makes and types have the VIN in different places. From roughly 1980 onwards, all VINs have consisted of 17 characters and commenced in all cases with the World Manufacturer Identifier Code (WMI) for each individual manufacturer, for example WDB for Daimler Chrysler.

With a VIN, a motor vehicle can be looked up and checked in police and vehicles registration records. To do this it is necessary to have the complete VIN.

However, the VIN is the number or code that is often tampered with as it is of crucial importance to identify any vehicle. Each manufacturer places this unique number in both visible and non-visible positions for identification purposes. The VIN is placed in a prominent non-removable position on a vehicle's bodywork or chassis and also on a plate fixed to the same bodywork. The modern trend is to put the vehicle details onto a sticker and not a plate. If the sticker is tampered with or someone tries to remove it, it is destroyed, in the process indicating foul play to the authorities. Common methods used to alter a VIN include:

- Grinding and re-stamping
- Removal and replacement of the component on which the VIN is situated
- Over-stamping or altering one or more characters of the VIN.

Most stolen vehicles are intended for the South African market. To be able to sell the vehicles in South Africa, the original identity of the vehicles needs to be changed or concealed. The easier it is to remove or conceal the identity of a vehicle, the more desirable the vehicle will be to criminals.

Investigations have proved that in almost all vehicle-related crimes, the primary and secondary identifiers (licence number, VIN and engine number) have been altered or removed in order to conceal a crime or the identity of the vehicle. The VIN of a so-called scrap vehicle is frequently used to give another vehicle a false identity.

### WHAT IS SAPVIN

A SAPVIN (South African Police Vehicle Identification Number) can only be issued by the SAPS in accordance with the

## ARTICLE— VEHICLE CRIME *CONT...*

Road Traffic Regulation 56, promulgated in terms of the National Road Traffic Act 93 of 1996. The SAPVIN is a number that is uniquely generated by the SAPS vehicle circulation system. The SAPVIN consists of 17 alpha-numerical characters that are affixed to the chassis and 11 alpha-numerical characters that are affixed to the engine. A SAPV1N is issued when a vehicle does not have a VIN, an engine number, when a VIN or engine number has been duplicated or when a VIN or engine number has been altered, defaced or obliterated.

### LEGISLATION TO FIGHT VEHICLE CRIME

The Prevention of Organised Crime Act (POCA) 121 of 1998 was promulgated to deal with suspects involved in certain organised crime activities. Common law crimes and existing legislation are applied parallel to the POCA. Therefore, when dealing with the laws applied in fighting organised crime which target vehicles as central commodity, crimes such as theft, robbery, fraud, the contravention of the POCA, contravention of the International Trade Administration Act 71 of 2002, contravention of the National Road Traffic Act 93 of 1996, contravention of the National Road Traffic Regulations of 1999 and contravention of sub-section 36 and 37 of General Law Amendment Act 62 of 1955 are used (Lebeya, 2007). Syndicates can be charged with racketeering/money laundering etc.

### WHAT HAPPENS TO UNIDENTIFIED RECOVERED VEHICLES

Years ago recovered vehicles were sold at police auctions, but this opened a gap for syndicates. The syndicates bought vehicles at low prices and used the documentation to legalise stolen cars. To fight corruption police had to put an end to selling these cars and started squashing them.

Annually approximately 12 000 recovered but unidentified vehicles, worth around R1 billion, are destroyed by the SAPS. Many are in poor condition, but some are top of the range and in an excellent condition.

Vehicles that are recovered by the police are taken to one of the more than 50 national vehicle pounds. These pounds, which look like car graveyards, are filled with thousands of dusty vehicles waiting for their owners to reclaim them or to be crushed. Owners are given a specific period to reclaim their vehicles and if they don't, the vehicles are crushed or those that can be used by the police will become a regulation 80(6) vehicle that can be used in the fight against crime.

Usually owners don't claim their vehicles from these pounds when they have been paid out the full insurance value. Sometimes owners are too traumatized to want their vehicle back if it was hijacked.

If the insurance company has paid out the vehicle owner, the vehicle becomes the property of the insurance company and has no value to the previous owner. The "former" owner has nothing to gain from going out of his/her way to identify the car because it does not belong to him/her anymore. The insurance company can't recover the recovered car if it has not been identified and there is nothing they can do to force people to identify stolen vehicles.

Each time a vehicle is stolen, the insurance premium increases. The large number of vehicles not recovered in South Africa also influences premiums because insurance companies are not getting a return on their investment.

Before a vehicle is squashed no parts are removed and no distinction is made between a C-Class Mercedes-Benz and a car worth R20 000. A heavy duty machine is used to crush the vehicles into blocks of 1.5 m 2 x 1.2 m. It takes 15 minutes to crush a vehicle. The compressed cars are bought by a leading South African scrap metal company directly from the SAPS for a few hundred Rands per tonne.

Vehicle related crime is highly organised and anyone can fall victim to it. Organised crime groups rely on the existence of a

## ARTICLE— VEHICLE CRIME *CONT...*

market and the principle of supply and demand, and those involved in vehicle crime are no exception.

Although vehicle crime is a huge challenge, Lebeya (2007) is of the opinion that it is the responsibility of SARPCCO member countries to make motor vehicle crime in the region a risky and unprofitable undertaking. The most effective weapon against organised crime is an organised and coordinated response. 📧

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**THANK YOU TO KOTIE GELDENHUYS FROM SERVAMUS FOR PERMISSION TO US THIS ARTICLE, WHICH APPEARED IN THE MAY 2010 EDITION OF SERVAMUS. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT KOTIE ON [kotie@servamus.co.za](mailto:kotie@servamus.co.za)**

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