OPERATION BLINK...

AND YOU’LL MISS IT

SURREY POLICE (UK)
Firstly... a little about us
The county of Surrey (UK)

1 of 48 counties in England
The county of Surrey (UK)

Population: 1.2m

Area: 1,663 km²
The county of Surrey (UK)
The county of Surrey (UK)

Surrey = 0.06% the land mass of Colorado

but...

Surrey = 20.48% of Colorado’s population
In late 2020, Kate was an Inspector in Surrey’s Serious Organised Crime Unit (SOCU).

She and the team had not used Problem-Oriented Policing before.
In late 2020, Matt was new in post and the force’s ‘Problem Solving Team’ was only a few months old.

The Problem Solving Team:
• 1 Chief Inspector
• 2 Analysts
• 2 Tactical Advisors
What’s a catalytic converter theft?
To what extent was it a problem?

UK Catalytic Converter Thefts *OPAL/Sky News

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Thefts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>21996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>34735</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

57.92% increase from 2019 to 2020.
To what extent was it a problem?

USA Catalytic Converter Thefts *BeenVerified

- 3389 in 2019
- 14433 in 2020

Increasing to 65498 in 2021 and 77933 in 2022!
To what extent was it a problem?

No. of Surrey Catalytic Converter Thefts (per day)

Year | No. of Thefts (per day)
-----|-------------------------
2018 | 0.32
2019 | 1.5
2020 | 3.19
Jan-Mar 2021 | 4.49

What are Surrey Police doing?
What was our specific problem?

Location

Victim/ Target
What was our specific problem?

Thefts per 10,000 persons
Jan 2020-Mar 2021
(6 month avg.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Thefts per 10,000 persons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surrey</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sussex</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampshire</td>
<td>1.81</td>
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</table>

Operation Blink... and you’ll miss it | Surrey Police – Kate Hyder & Matt Sessions
What was our specific problem?

- Hybrid cars
  - Toyota Prius/Auris
  - Honda Jazz/CR-V
  - Lexus RX

- Average victim age – 52

- Average victim cost – £1,500 *Admiral

- Often called their breakdown service first
What was our specific problem?

They are thinking about writing off my car and I need it for work as I’m a caregiver...
I’m absolutely devastated.

This crime is getting out of hand. My car was targeted twice within 8 days...
I am a single mum and this is just wrong.
What was our specific problem?

- **Victim/Target**
  - Travelling Organised Crime Groups (OCGs)
    - Small groups
    - Brazen
    - Use violence if needed

- **Offender**
  - False registration plates and lack of suspects/arrests
  - Lack of intelligence on disposal routes

- **Temporal**
What was our specific problem?

**Offender**

* Thefts rising in recent years

**Temporal**

* Spates of offending
* Offending peaked between 10:00-15:00, but poor data quality
What was our specific problem?

A small number of Organised Crime Groups are travelling into Surrey to steal catalytic converters. They do this with great ease and often steal multiple in one go. They mostly target older hybrid cars, in car parks, in the middle of the day.
Analysis
Why was it happening so often?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Opportunity?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surrey- the ideal target</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Guards</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• CCTV</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Police patrols</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locational design</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Entrances/exits</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Size</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Foliage (e.g large trees)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why was it happening so often?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Offender</th>
<th>Victim/Target</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Opportunity?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easy to complete with little skill</td>
<td>Catlocs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposal routes</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small no. of OCGs</td>
<td>A few successes = big reductions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Why was it happening so often?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Opportunity?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victims owned the wrong car</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical protection for target</td>
<td>Catlocs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deterrent on target</td>
<td>Forensic Marking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking style?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why was it happening so often?

1. It's so easy
2. There's no risk
3. 94.7% don't report via 999
4. No one knows what it is!

The Five Whys

The Four Whys
Why was it happening so often?

Offender

Victim/
Target

Problem

Handler
Offender
Location
Manager

Target / Victim

Guardian
Why was it happening so often?

Offender

Victim/
Target
Why was it happening so often?

Offender

Victim/
Target

PROTECT MARK PARK

Protect your car by asking your dealer if they can give you any advice on locks or guards that are approved by the vehicle manufacturer and tested to Sold Secure Gold.

Mark your catalytic converter with a forensic marker and register your converter to make it harder for thieves to dispose of.

Park your car somewhere well-lit and overlooked, amongst as many cars as possible. Try to park so the converter can’t be easily reached - close to a wall or fence. Try not to park at the end of the row if there are free spaces.

If you’re a victim of catalytic converter theft, call 101

If at a railway station, call British Transport Police on 0800 40 50 40 or Text 61016
The hypothesis

Lack of awareness  Low risk  More thefts
Testing the hypothesis

350%  
999 calls  
53%  
Thefts

Operation Blink... and you’ll miss it | Surrey Police – Kate Hyder & Matt Sessions
The objective

- Increase awareness
- Increase 999 calls
- Increase arrests
- Increase risk
- Reduce thefts
Response
Education, education, education
Recognise this?

It helps to clean a car's exhaust fumes, and contains valuable metals, putting it high on any metal thief's wish list...

That's right, it's a catalytic converter

Education, education, education

Blink... and you'll miss it...

Catalytic converter thefts can happen in under a minute

- Seen a car being jacked up?
- Heard the sound of metal being cut?
- This is a catalytic converter theft in progress. You are witnessing a crime.

CALL 999
Education, education, education
Education, education, education
Education, education, education
Education, education, education
Did it work?

Change in rate of calls via 999 & suspect vehicles identified (pre-response & during response rollout)

Pre-response | During response rollout
---|---
% of calls via 999 | % of incidents with a suspect vehicle
5.30% | 14.38%
8.73% | 171%
19.18% | 120%

Did it work?

13 arrests
Did it work?

Surrey catalytic converter thefts per day (pre-response vs. 6-months post-response)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jan-Mar 2021</th>
<th>1 year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-response</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months post-response</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td></td>
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Did it work?

Thefts p/10,000 persons, pre vs. post Operation Blink
(6-month avg. for 15 months before vs. 6 months after)

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Case study examples

• RHS Wisley fighting back

• Tracking thieves to London, followed by covert operation

• Working with our regional organised crime team and His Majesty’s Revenue & Customs
Influencing others
Influencing others

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If you’re a victim of catalytic converter theft, call British Transport Police on 0800 40 50 40 or Text 61016

1. Spotted someone under a car?
2. Heard metal being cut?
3. This could be a catalytic converter theft in progress – call 999

Metal thieves operate in this area.

NPCC
BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE
Long-term results

Surrey catalytic converter thefts & calls via 999 (up to May 2023)

- Pre-response: 3.52 thefts per day
- 6 months post-response: 1.75 thefts per day
- 26 months post-response: 2.08 thefts per day

% of calls via 999
- Pre-response: 5.3%
- During response: 14.38%
- Post-response: 25.75%
Was it cost effective?

£485,865 saved in 6 months

£1.71m in 26 months

Forensic marking... worth it?
Key learning

1. Data from breakdown services/car dealers/garages

2. A survey to measure awareness

3. The value of data

4. Tailor the learning to your specific problem
Thank you for listening!

Any questions?

Contact:
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Matt.Sessions@warwickshire.police.uk