

News Release

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Police agencies shut down juvenile auto theft ring

- *8 juveniles and one 18-year-old arrested in past week for stealing new vehicles from Jefferson North Plant.*

A multi-agency law enforcement task force, working closely with Chrysler Group Security, has dismantled a ring of car thieves as young as 13 years old who have been stealing brand new Chrysler, Dodge and Jeep vehicles from a shipping company's lot at the automaker's Jefferson North Assembly plant in Detroit, officials announced today.

"These individuals have been a 'Kiddie Crime Wave' at this facility and most likely elsewhere on the county's east side," said Wayne County Sheriff Warren Evans, whose auto theft investigators led a late night operation on Monday that resulted in the arrest of five suspects and the recovery of nine stolen vehicles. "I understand that one of the young suspects is so small that he only steals cars in which he knows he can reach the pedals."

On Monday night, more than 20 officers from the Wayne County Sheriff's Office, Grosse Pointe Park, City of Grosse Pointe, Harper Woods, East Pointe and the Oakland County Sheriff's Office swarmed the property after watching nine young suspects sneak onto the property and steal the following vehicles, all of which were recovered and have a combined retail value of more than \$250,000:

- (Five) 2008 Dodge Avengers
- (Two) 2008 Dodge Chargers
- (One) 2008 Jeep Commander
- (One) 2008 Jeep Grand Cherokee

Working on tip information, police and Chrysler Group Security observed the nine suspects sneaking onto a secured lot owned and operated by Cassens Transport Company, adjacent to the Jefferson North Plant at approximately 10:00 pm on Monday. The lot serves as a regional holding area prior to shipping to dealerships, for Chrysler plants in southeast Michigan. The suspects all were observed getting into vehicles and driving away, which is when officers moved into action. Although four of the suspects eluded capture, all nine vehicles were recovered.

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The bust was the second in less than a week involving juveniles stealing cars from this location. Late last week, four juvenile suspects were arrested after having stolen two Jeep Cherokees and a Chrysler Pacifica from the same plant. At the time of their arrest, all four suspects were riding inside one of the stolen Jeeps. All three vehicles eventually were recovered.

“Business must work hand-in-hand with law enforcement to curb local crime, and keep our neighborhoods safe,” added Chris Hogan, Senior Manager, Chrysler Group Corporate Security. “This operation was a great example of that teamwork. Chrysler Group provided some information, but the joint task force was very thorough and professional in following up on it.”

Only one of the nine suspects taken into custody during the past week has been an adult – an 18-year-old Detroit man. Among the other eight suspects have been two 16-year-olds, two 15-year-olds, three 14-year olds, and one 13-year-old. One of the 14-year-old suspects, Evans said, is a pregnant female.

Evans said that his investigators believe all nine of the suspects currently in custody, as well as four still at large, have been working together. Evans added that the arrests should significantly reduce auto theft reports in the area.

The operation was led by the Wayne County East Side ACTION team (Arresting Car Thieves In Our Neighborhoods), which is comprised of deputies from the Wayne County Sheriff’s Office along with police officers from the five Grosse Pointe communities and Harper Woods.