

SANTA ANA POLICE DEPARTMENT

DAVID VALENTIN · CHIEF OF POLICE

TRAINING BULLETIN

"Education promotes professional and responsive law enforcement"

Illegally Subplated Vehicles Entered into the Stolen Vehicle System

Purpose

The purpose of this training bulletin is to inform personnel of a change in the entry of vehicles in the California Stolen Vehicle System (SVS). This change involves an additional caution code for use with "**Lost or Stolen License Plate**" entries, allowing the entry of possible VIN switched vehicles with illegally obtained subplates.

Introduction

Vehicle theft investigators throughout California, especially those assigned to the regional auto theft task forces, have requested a special entry into the SVS for vehicles that have been illegally subplated and are possible VIN switched vehicles. In cooperation with the California Highway Patrol (CHP), the California Department of Justice (DOJ) has determined that these illegally obtained license plates should be entered in the SVS, entry level one (**California Only**), as "Lost or Stolen License Plates" with caution code "V". The use of caution code "V" will provide a literal computer response of "*** CAUTION: POSSIBLE VIN SWITCH ***" upon a license inquiry of these plates.

Before entry is made into SVS, vehicle theft investigators make certain that the subplates were illegally obtained. The SVS entry lists the investigator in the victim data fields as the victim. A daytime and a nighttime/weekend phone number is included in the entry. The computer entry will remain in SVS for one year past the year the license plate registration expires. The miscellaneous field, which includes 19 characters, may include relevant data such as "INNOCENT PURCHASER."

One of the primary reasons DOJ decided to enter the vehicles into SVS by plate, rather than as a vehicle, was to avoid the possibility of innocent purchasers being involved in felony car stops. DOJ believed that if the vehicle were to be listed as a stolen vehicle or as a felony vehicle, numerous innocent civilians would be subjected to facing guns and being pruned out on the ground. With subplating, almost all the persons possessing the vehicles with these license plates will be "*victim innocent purchasers*."

Background

Since 1994 there has been a significant increase in the number of cases in California where vehicles are illegally subplated. The CHP issued a Training Bulletin on February 22, 1995,

regarding the illegal subplating of vehicles. The following information from that bulletin summarizes the subplating scenario:

Illegal subplating occurs when an individual steals a vehicle, and in an attempt to legitimize it, locates another "donor" vehicle of the same model and approximate year of manufacture. The individual then records the license plate number and vehicle identification number (VIN) of the "donor" vehicle and files a "Lost or Stolen Plate" form with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), swearing under penalty of perjury to be the registered owner of the vehicle, obtaining a new set of license plates (subplates to the original). The thief is now able to completely VIN switch the stolen vehicle, utilizing a fabricated public VIN plate and re-stamped secondary numbers. The thief then affixes the duplicate license plates on the stolen vehicle and quickly sells the vehicle to an innocent purchaser. In some instances the thief will, in addition to obtaining new license plates, file a "Change of Address" form with DMV, requesting that a duplicate title be issued under the pretext that the original was lost during a recent move. The registered owner of the "donor" vehicle will have no knowledge of the subplate transactions until receiving a parking ticket for an unknown vehicle with an unknown license plate number or upon expiration of their own registration.

Example

A response to a hit on a "Lost or Stolen Plate" with the "V" caution code would appear as follows:

FROM CLETS: IA

QV.CA0301920.LIC/5LPZ137

INQUIRY MATCH ON LIC/5LPZ137

ONE LOST/STOLEN PLATE

** CAUTION: POSSIBLE VIN SWITCH **

LIC/5LPZ137 LIS/CA LIY/06 LIT/PC

ORI/CA0301900 OCA/0512345 DOT/20050210 FCN/3929522302922

MIS/INNOCENT PURCHASER

ENT/ON CALIF FILE ONLY

IMMEDIATELY CONFIRM WITH ORI/CA0301900 SANTA ANA PD MNE/SAP0

TELEPHONE 714 647-5034

***** VICTIM DATA *****

VNM/DET GARY LABB

VAD/OCATT

VCY/ANAHEIM

VSA/CA

Summary

If you run a license plate and the return from SVS indicates a "*Lost or Stolen Plate*" entry along with the "*** POSSIBLE VIN SWITCH ***" code, you may have an innocent purchaser driving a VIN switch with an illegally obtained subplate.

The driver may be an unknowing "victim innocent purchaser." Officers are advised to treat the situation accordingly. More than likely the driver will be losing their vehicle once the investigation is conducted. Prior to telling the driver you are going to take their vehicle away from them, try to obtain as much information as you can from the driver, such as when and where they purchased the vehicle, how much they paid for the vehicle, who sold them the vehicle, and any paperwork that might be with the vehicle. Try to obtain as much driver identification as possible because follow-up contact by an investigator will be necessary.

Contact the investigator listed in the victim information for instructions. If the investigator is close to the vehicle stop, they may respond. If they are a good distance away, they may ask you to impound the vehicle for them. If the vehicle is to be impounded, impound under VC 22655.5 (evidence), indicating the investigator involved, their agency, and their case number in the narrative of the report. Advise the driver to contact the investigator involved at the day number provided. Please do not give the driver the night time/weekend phone number indicated for the investigator. In some cases, that may be a personal home number.

With your help, numerous VIN switched stolen vehicles will be returned to their rightful owners and suspects in the VIN switching/subplating will be identified.

Acknowledgment: This Training Bulletin was prepared by Investigator Gary Labb with the aid of DOJ Supervisor Michael Boruff. 9/95.

Reviewed By: Inv. G. Labb & DOJ Supervisor Michael Boruff

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