



# 10 busted in St. Paul selling stolen cars for scrap

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ST. PAUL, Minn. -- Charges are expected Wednesday against 10 suspects in a car theft ring that involved selling stolen vehicles for scrap.

Ramsey County Attorney John Choi says the charges are the result of a three-month investigation by St. Paul Police and the Ramsey County Attorney's Office. He says the suspects stole more than 50 vehicles and sold them to local scrap yards.

St. Paul Police Spokesman John Keating says metal from just one vehicle can generate \$300 to \$350.

"The message I want to be heard loud and clear is that auto theft is a high priority of our office and that car thieves will be held accountable in Ramsey County," Choi told reporters Wednesday.

Choi says most of the stolen vehicles were older, run down models that were scrapped at Metro Metals, but emphasized

that the owner of that business is now cooperating fully with authorities.

Investigators say suspects used three different methods to steal and sell the stolen vehicles. The first involved thieves who identified old vehicles they wanted to steal, called tow truck drivers claiming the vehicles were theirs, and had them towed to a scrap yard where they were sold.

The second scheme involved tow truck drivers who actually stole and sold the vehicles themselves.

Finally, police say some of the suspects actually stole the vehicles themselves from parking lots or the street and drove them to scrap yards, eventually selling them for cash.


Choi and St. Paul Police Chief Tom Smith are urging lawmakers to tighten a loophole in state law, and make it mandatory that a person provide a title or proof of ownership before a car can be sold for scrap.

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They also recommend that a mandatory waiting period be required before a vehicle can be salvaged so records can be checked.

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