

Stolen vehicle examiners

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Spotlight on a role: Qualified stolen vehicle examiners (QSVEs)

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The Vehicle Crime Group within Merseyside Police is made up of three police officers, who are all qualified stolen vehicle examiners (QSVEs). We have a combined 60 years of policing service between us, with varied backgrounds from neighbourhood policing to roads policing.

We carry out physical examinations of vehicles and vessels on a daily basis, including cars, motorcycles, caravans, trailers and boats, as well as plant and agricultural machinery. When a vehicle's identity has been altered it's our responsibility to work out why and how, and to find out its true identity. We use various methods to do this, such as overt and covert security features, identifying component parts and chemical recovery. This is a process used to restore a vehicle's identifiable features when they have been erased or ground out.

On a typical day, we'll assess, prioritise and then carry out requests to examine vehicles. We use dedicated police recovery garages and have to be forensically aware, as we examine some vehicles prior to any form of crime scene investigation (CSI) work. We also compile reports and photographs for each examination, and update officers with our findings.

Our role has become far more diverse over the last few years, due to advancements in vehicle technology. We assist with telematic and digital enquiries, for anything from stolen vehicles through to murder. We often advise officers – for example, on whether a vehicle is supported for embedded data tracking services.

We're also a single point of contact between officers and vehicle manufacturers. All forces nominate officers to be placed on the LEAD list (Law Enforcement Auto-Industry Directory), with our function being to triage enquiries and to prevent manufacturers from being asked any unnecessary questions.

We're often called upon to attend chop-shops. These are locations used to dismantle stolen vehicles, where their parts are then sold on or used to repair crash-damaged vehicles. A chop-shop

may be discovered by spontaneous incidents or pre-planned from intelligence. We examine complete vehicles and their component parts, to identify where the parts originate from.

The QSVE role varies between forces. As it doesn't require a warranted officer to perform the role, many forces in England and Wales have accredited police staff as their QSVEs. Some forces have a 'multi-hatted' approach, where the QSVE will also have another role, such as roads policing or rural and wildlife crime team.

We have an excellent support network among fellow QSVEs, and we are all active members of the **National Association of Stolen Vehicle Examiners** (NASVE), which holds regular meetings to discuss current trends and experiences.

Colleagues are often surprised to hear we exist and what expertise we can offer. We recommend you to find out your force's QSVEs, as they may be able to get you that bit of information you need for an ongoing investigation.

- This article was peer reviewed by Detective Sergeant Maddie deBuse, Thames Valley Police.

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