



# Sharen Wilson Criminal District Attorney



## For Immediate Release

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## Landmark effort to crack down on car thefts

(Fort Worth, TX) – Warning to auto thieves: Don't steal vehicles in Tarrant County. Law enforcement here has a new way to fight auto crimes.

Zane Reid, assistant criminal district attorney in Tarrant County, has been appointed to work with the Tarrant Regional Auto Crimes Task Force and only prosecute auto theft cases. He is the first prosecutor in Texas named to solely work with an auto crimes task force.

"We are dealing with a very, very evolving field of auto crimes now," said Bryan Sudan, commander of the Tarrant Regional Auto Crimes Task Force. "Older cars, the ones you can mechanically steal, are aging out. We are seeing professional thieves using alternate methods to steal cars.

"We are now seeing very organized groups using sophisticated methods to steal vehicles," he said. "We need more coordination with the prosecution of these cases."

In the past, auto theft cases were sent to the DA's Office and assigned to various prosecutors. All will now go to Reid, who will be able to spot trends or see if there are multiple cases involving the same defendant that should be grouped together.

"This will shine a light on these crimes and help us better prevent them from occurring," Sudan said.

These cases add up to millions of dollars of loss from theft and involve multiple agencies across the metroplex. Coordination with all these entities and the District Attorney's office is the key.

Reid, a prosecutor with Tarrant County since 2015, said he is excited to join the task force.

"My goal will be to provide greater consistency and availability to our law enforcement agencies to ensure successful prosecution," he said. "The hope is to increase the prosecution rate and strength of sentences for auto crimes committed in Tarrant County and the surrounding area."

Auto crimes have evolved as technology in newer cars prompted thieves to refine how they steal them. They now use fake IDs to buy cars, steal auto parts such as catalytic converters and reprogram fobs to steal vehicles.

In Tarrant County, motor vehicle thefts rose to 6,367 in 2020 from 5,895 in 2019. Burglaries from motor vehicles grew to 14,288 in 2020 from 13,884 in 2019. And fraud related motor vehicle crimes reached 56 in 2020, up from 52 in 2019, according to statistics from the task force.

"These aren't minor thefts," Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney Sharen Wilson said. "With the rising cost of vehicles, these thefts have a major impact on individuals and businesses. We need to do everything we can to stop these thefts."

The Tarrant Regional Auto Crimes Task Force began in 1993 to combat motor vehicle theft. It is made up of investigators in the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles, Tarrant County Sheriff's Office, Parker County Sheriff's Office, National Insurance Crime Bureau and police departments in Arlington, Fort Worth, Hurst, Haltom City and Euless.

"Through the dedication of a prosecutor to the MVCPA-funded law enforcement task force, Tarrant County is better able to seek justice for its citizens and the people of Texas," said Laredo Assistant Chief of Police Miguel "Mike" Rodriguez, the governor-appointed chairman of the Motor Vehicle Crime Prevention Authority.

Grant funding for this position comes from the Texas Motor Vehicle Crime Prevention Authority, a division of the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles.

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