



# 2015 Theft Report





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## AN ALLIANCE WITH A PURPOSE

Through a joint alliance, the National Equipment Register (NER) and the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) continue to make positive strides in deterring crime by equipment thieves. By combining services and areas of expertise, we're providing an efficient conduit for law enforcement and insurers to identify any type of heavy equipment at any time of day and help contractors reduce the likelihood of unknowingly purchasing stolen equipment.

Our alliance ensures that NER will continue to provide, manage, and expand its database of insurer-supplied theft reports and information about manufacturers, owners, and damaged equipment. The NICB will extend the reach and value of that information through its nationwide network of special agents, who are trained in heavy-equipment theft and available to respond to law enforcement calls for investigative assistance or identification requests.

Better ownership documentation, accurate equipment identification, proper reporting, greater site security, and an overall better understanding of the threat will continue to increase the ability of law enforcement to combat equipment theft. Awareness, education, and training are key components of an overall fraud prevention plan that may lead to immediate economic benefits for contractors, owners, and insurers.

Through our collaborative efforts, we're reducing the cost of theft for equipment owners and insurers by increasing the likelihood of recovery and arrest. We're also increasing the awareness of the theft issue and promoting knowledge sharing, thus making heavy equipment a riskier target for thieves.



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## OVERVIEW

The NER and NICB annual report on equipment theft in the United States is based primarily on data the NICB drew from the National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) database of more than 10,000 construction and farm equipment thefts in 2015 and information reported to ISO ClaimSearch®. We publish similar reports every year to help track trends using the growing volume of data available to NER and the NICB.

## AIM

Our study provides equipment owners, insurance companies, and law enforcement with information to guide theft prevention efforts and allocate investigative resources. The study puts the information into context through notes, analyses, and conclusions that relate to the protection, investigation, and recovery of heavy equipment.

As in the past, the 2015 report seeks to answer key questions: Who steals heavy equipment, and how do they do it? How much and what types of equipment do they steal? Where do they steal equipment from, and where does it go?

## DATA SOURCES

The NICB has access to all the data in the NCIC vehicle theft file, and it maintains a mirror image of that file. The FBI; other federal, state, local, and foreign criminal justice agencies; and authorized courts submit data on stolen vehicles, stolen vehicle parts, and mobile off-road equipment and components. The NICB uses the data to assist insurance companies in recovering stolen vehicles and mobile off-road equipment.

Since 2001, NER has developed databases of heavy-equipment ownership and theft information. Owners and law enforcement agencies report thefts directly to NER's database through its website. Insurers report thefts through ISO ClaimSearch, the insurance industry's all-claims database. Through an alliance with the American Rental Association (ARA), NER can capture loss and ownership data from many of the world's largest rental fleets and hundreds of smaller fleets.

Although statistics can't reveal all underlying reasons for the high level of equipment theft, we can draw conclusions from trends and the daily contact that NER staff members have with theft victims, insurers, and law enforcement.

## PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

We've presented each set of data in graphs or tables to allow easy comparison and to highlight trends. Notes explain data sources and gathering techniques. Analyses discuss the relative importance of factors that affect each set of results. We provide additional commentary where results suggest a particular action or response.

# Theft by State

## Top Ten States for Equipment Theft in 2015

Rank	State	Thefts
1	Texas	2,058
2	North Carolina	891
3	Florida	772
4	South Carolina	672
5	California	645
6	Georgia	586
7	Tennessee	488
8	Oklahoma	411
9	Indiana	391
10	Arkansas	318

The top five states account for 44% of all thefts.

The top ten states account for 63% of all thefts.

## NOTES

1. Although equipment thefts occurred in every state, the top five states accounted for 44% of the total number of thefts in 2015. In 2014, the top five states accounted for 41%.
2. The table represents 11,493 equipment theft reports captured by NCIC during 2015.

## ANALYSIS

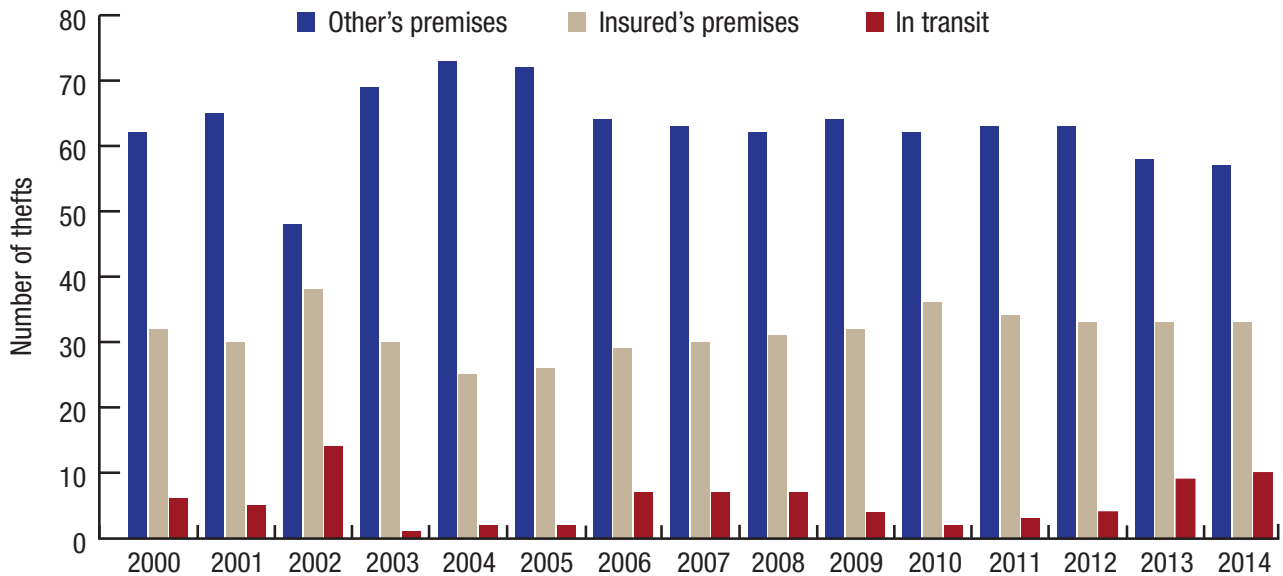
1. Theft levels closely correspond to the amount of equipment in a particular area. In other words, the states with the highest volume of construction and agriculture—and therefore the most machinery—have the largest number of thefts.
2. Organized theft rings are likely to develop in areas with a high concentration of equipment and a large number of potential buyers of used equipment, stolen or otherwise. Higher loss ratios for insurers in certain areas reflect that development.
3. The top ten states for equipment theft in 2015 are the same states that made the top ten equipment theft list in 2014, with the ranking staying relatively the same for both years.

## COMMENT

Sometimes, theft hot spots occur when an area is experiencing an industrial boom. The influx of construction work correlates with higher numbers of heavy equipment in the area—which attracts attention from thieves and increases the risk of theft. NER's regional theft alerts highlight such activity. When equipment owners are aware of these indicators of theft and know how to thwart equipment thieves, there's often a noticeable drop in theft rates.

# Theft by Type of Location

The graph below shows insured losses by the type of location of the theft:



## NOTES

1. Losses by type of location of theft are displayed as a percentage of all claims.
2. Source is ISO Inland Marine Circular, Contractors Equipment, All Classes.

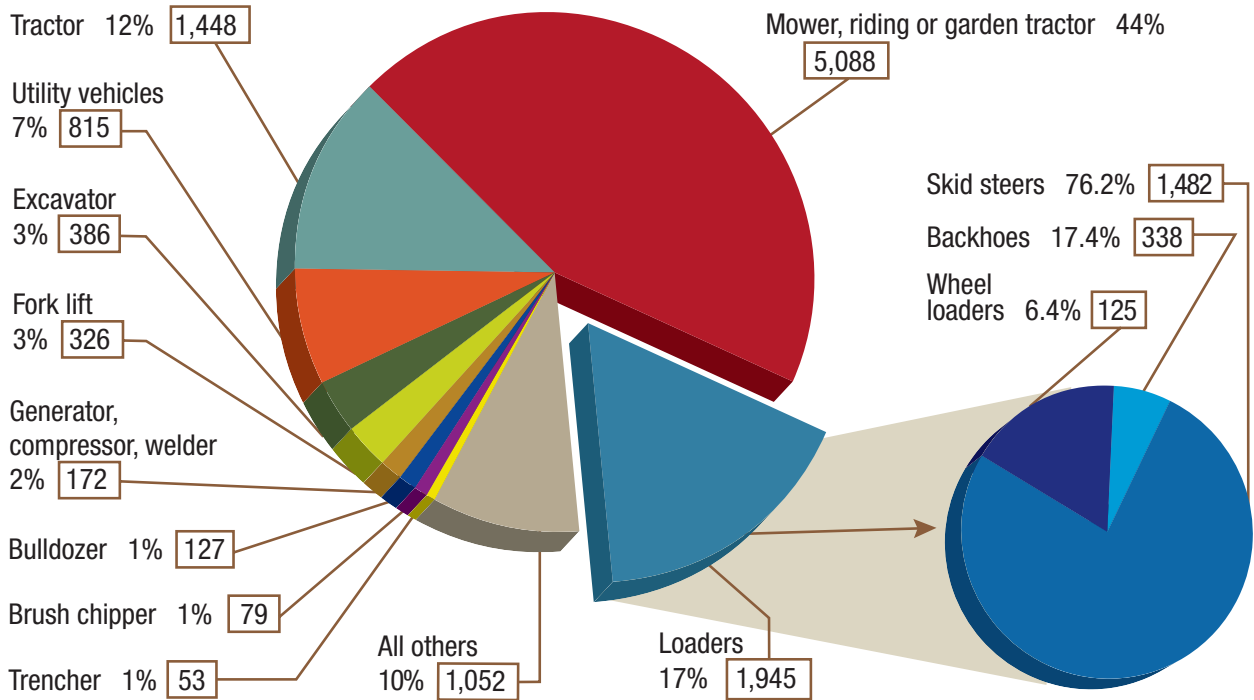
## ANALYSIS

With regard to theft by type of location, two factors should be considered: the location where the equipment spends the most time and the level of security at each type of location. Most often, equipment is on a work site, labeled on the graph as “Other’s premises.” Those work sites usually have lower levels of physical security than an “Insured’s premises,” which is often a fenced-in compound.

## COMMENT

It’s not enough to focus solely on the security of premises and work sites. Equipment users should also secure the machines themselves by disabling equipment by use of hydraulic cylinder locks or ignition or hydraulic system lockouts—or simply by removing battery cables. Owners and users should stage pieces of equipment to prevent them from being dragged onto a transport. Equipment should also never be left on trailers.

# Types of Equipment Stolen



## NOTES

1. The chart represents 11,493 theft reports submitted to NCIC in 2015.
2. The inclusion of landscaping equipment—mainly commercial riding mowers—reduces the percentage of all other categories.
3. The top five types of equipment account for 84% of all losses. In 2014, the top five represented 78% of all thefts.
4. “Tractor” is a broad category, including compact, utility, and agricultural tractors.
5. More than 50 types of equipment make up the “All others” category. They include but are not limited to graders, scrapers, wood chippers, rollers, and miscellaneous farming equipment.

## ANALYSIS

1. Two key factors determine the type of equipment that thieves are most likely to steal: value and mobility. Value is the primary factor, except for items too large to move on a small trailer. For instance, large excavators are valuable but seldom stolen because they are difficult to move.
2. Another factor to consider is the number of each type of equipment in circulation. For example, skid steer loaders account for more than 36% of new construction equipment financed in the United States in the last five years.
3. Dozers and wheel loaders are the most valuable types of equipment in the top ten, but backhoes and skid steers are easier to transport and are multifunctional on job sites. Therefore, the latter group represents a greater percentage of thefts.
4. The types of high-value equipment reported stolen frequently are wheeled machines, such as wheel loaders.

## COMMENT

Equipment owners should consider mobility of equipment as well as value when planning security efforts.

# Theft by Manufacturer

Rank	Manufacturer	Thefts
1	John Deere	2,590
2	Kubota Tractor Corp.	1,123
3	Bobcat	788
4	Caterpillar	691
5	Toro	404
6	Husqvarna	360
7	Case	308
8	Exmark	299
9	Cub Cadet Corp.	257
10	Craftsman	205

## NOTES

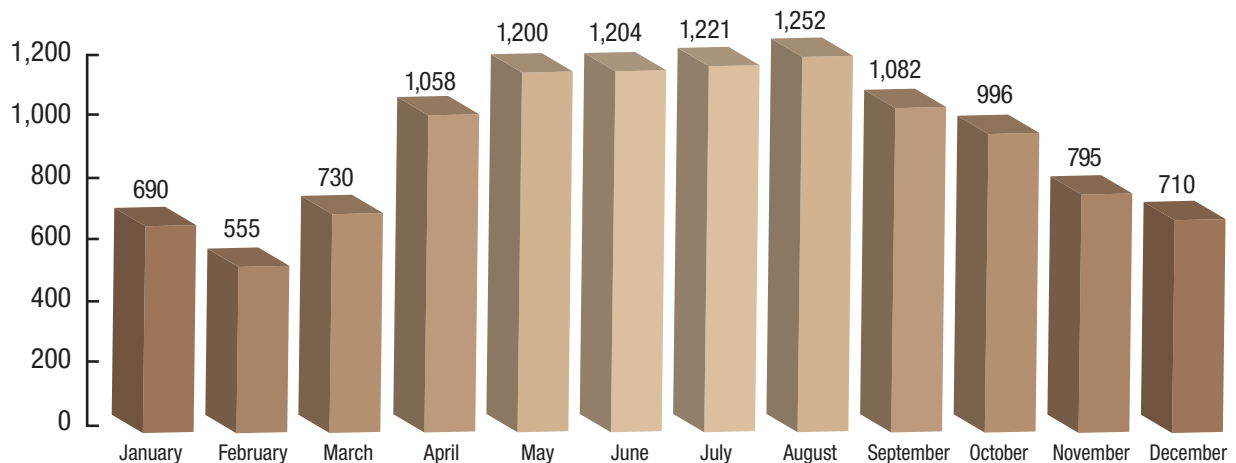
1. Source is the total number of thefts reported to NCIC during 2015.

## ANALYSIS

1. While all makes of off-road equipment have little or no standard equipment security, the manufacturers on the above list make the most compact—and thus, most easily stolen—equipment. The list does not necessarily follow the entire market share of all heavy equipment manufactured.
2. If two pieces of equipment are equally easy to steal, a thief is more likely to steal the machine of greater value. Age, condition, and brand determine a machine's perceived value.

# Theft by Month

The graph below illustrates equipment losses by the month the theft was reported.



## ANALYSIS

Theft levels closely correspond with peak construction periods. In other words, the months with the highest volume of theft are the ones that have increased equipment activity due to cooperative weather, longer days, and the end of a crop growth cycle. As equipment owners move items between job sites and fields, there are greater risks, exposures, and opportunities for theft. There is an additional likelihood that thefts may go unnoticed for a longer period of time than when equipment is stolen from an owner's yard.



# Model Year of Equipment Stolen

Equipment produced in the last ten years accounted for 72% of thefts reported to NCIC in 2015. Of the thefts reported in 2015, 51% were machines manufactured in the last five years. The table lists the top ten years of manufacture for machines stolen in 2015:

Year	Amount
2015	2,126
2014	1,409
2013	1,017
2012	851
2010	558
2011	508
2008	497
2007	492
2006	463
2005	468

## NOTES

1. Source is the total number of thefts reported to NCIC during 2015.
2. Each piece of equipment manufactured in 2015 faced potential theft for only part of the year—from the date sold to December 31.
3. Results may be slightly skewed because owners often misstate the date of manufacture. For example, a buyer may list a 2014 model purchased in 2015 as a 2015 model.

## ANALYSIS

The newer a piece of equipment, the more likely someone will steal it. If given the choice between two similar machines, a thief will choose the newer, more valuable machine because they are equally easy to steal. Those results are in stark contrast to larger trends in automobile theft, where older models account for more stolen cars. Newer cars carry more sophisticated antitheft technology. Heavy-equipment design, however, emphasizes productivity instead of security. The necessity for multiple operators leads to little or no antitheft technology. Many heavy-equipment manufacturers installed as few security features on 2012 models as they did on 1980 models.

# Top Ten Cities for Equipment Theft

Rank	City	State	Thefts
1	Houston	TX	266
2	Conroe	TX	94
3	Miami	FL	91
4	San Antonio	TX	76
5	Greenville	SC	66
6	Liberty City	TX	64
7	Oklahoma City	OK	63
8	Dallas	TX	61
9	Anderson	SC	60
10	Charlotte	NC	57

## NOTES

1. Source is the total number of thefts reported to NCIC during 2015.
2. All of the top ten cities are in the top ten states for theft.
3. Conroe, Liberty City, Dallas, Anderson, and Charlotte are all new entrants to this list, with three of these new entrants residing in the state of Texas (the number one ranked state for theft in 2015).

## ANALYSIS

It's not surprising that cities with the greatest number of thefts are often located in states that rank among the top ten for theft. The cities tend to be in states that are near the southern border, possess a major port, are experiencing construction booms, or possess all of these characteristics.

# Theft by Census Population

Rank	Core-Based Statistical Area (CBSA)	2015 Thefts	2013 U.S. Census Population Estimate	HE Theft Rate per 10,000 Inhabitants	Increase in HE Theft Rate from 2014	2014 Rank
1	Baraboo, WI	30	63,162	4.75	2,900%	579
2	Williston, ND	14	29,595	4.73	8%	3
3	Cordele, GA	11	23,336	4.71	267%	78
4	El Campo, TX	19	41,216	4.61	850%	325
5	Athens, TN	21	52,341	4.01	24%	11
6	Shawnee, OK	28	71,158	3.93	33%	13
7	Corinth, MS	14	37,316	3.75	367%	173
8	Gainesville, TX	14	38,467	3.64	27%	14
9	Palestine, TX	21	57,938	3.62	250%	128
10	Kinston, NC	19	58,914	3.23	533%	314

## NOTES

1. Sources are the total number of thefts reported to NCIC during 2015 and 2014 and the 2013 U.S. Census report.
2. The term “Core-Based Statistical Area” (CBSA) is a collective term for both metro and micro areas. A metro area contains a core urban area population of 50,000 or greater, and a micro area contains a core urban population of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000. Each metro or micro area consists of one or more counties and includes the counties containing the core urban area as well as any adjacent counties that have a high degree of social and economic integration (as measured by commuting to work) with the urban core.

## ANALYSIS

It’s not surprising to see Texas, Oklahoma, and North Carolina in the top ten list for theft rates in a given CBSA since they are also on the list of top ten states for thefts for 2015. What’s surprising is that none of the regions in the top ten have a population greater than 100,000. Although the population is small in these regions, more thefts occur per person than in the larger metropolitan areas. The relatively high rate of theft by population in these regions indicates that equipment owners should not be lax with security no matter how remote or loosely populated an area may be. In fact, the data suggests that equipment owners and dealers should be more concerned about equipment theft in regions with smaller populations.

Looking at the large increases in the HE (heavy equipment) Theft Rates per 10,000 Inhabitants from 2014 to 2015:

1. The city of Baraboo, Wisconsin, introduced a number of construction plans scheduled to begin between 2015 and 2017.<sup>1</sup> This new construction appears to have made a large impact on the theft-to-population rate, as the city moved from 579th place with one theft in 2014 to number one with 30 thefts in 2015.

1. [http://www.wiscnews.com/baraboonewsrepublic/news/local/article\\_9e7a142b-1a35-54eb-b9bc-2e4a39fca37f.html](http://www.wiscnews.com/baraboonewsrepublic/news/local/article_9e7a142b-1a35-54eb-b9bc-2e4a39fca37f.html)

## Theft by Census Population continued

2. Cordele, Georgia, moved from 78th place on the HE Theft Rate list in 2014, when it had three thefts, to third place in 2015, with 11 reported thefts. In addition, Cordele's crime rate is much higher than the U.S. average; the city has a crime index of 2, meaning that the city is safer than only 2% of all other U.S. cities. In addition, the property crime rates are approximately 63 per 1,000 residents, higher than the U.S. average of 26.<sup>2</sup>
3. El Campo, Texas, moved from 325th place, with two crimes in 2014, to fourth place for the HE Theft Rates, with 19 crimes reported in 2015. This growth in crimes reported could be explained by the city's close proximity to Houston, which was the number one city for thefts reported in 2015. Similarly, Palestine, Texas, moved from 128th place to ninth place, with six reported thefts in 2014 and 21 reported in 2015. Palestine is relatively close to both Dallas and Houston, number one and number eight on our top cities list, respectively.
4. Kinston, North Carolina, moved from 314th on our list to tenth, with three crimes reported in 2014 and 19 crimes reported in 2015. Kinston's location relative to port locations may have influenced this.

2. <http://www.neighborhoodscout.com/ga/cordele/crime/>

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## The Cost of Equipment Theft

At present, there is no centralized, accurate, or exhaustive database that includes every loss. NER examines detailed theft reports from a specific area that accurately reports theft—such as a fleet, industry, or region—to make assumptions and develop trends. Then we apply those trends to the entire market share of that specific area to build a national figure. Annual estimates of the cost of equipment theft vary from about \$300 million to \$1 billion, with most estimates in the range of \$400 million.

### NOTES

1. **The estimates do not include the theft of tools or building materials or damage to equipment and premises caused during a theft.**
2. **The estimates do not include losses from business interruption. Those losses include the cost of rentals, project-delay penalties, and wasted workforce and management time.**

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### ANALYSIS

Several factors contribute to the high level of equipment theft:

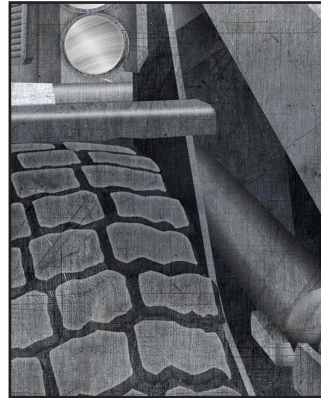
- the value of heavy equipment\*
- poor equipment and site security
- opportunities to sell stolen equipment in the used-equipment market
- low risk of detection and arrest
- lenient penalties for thieves if prosecuted and convicted

*\*The average estimated value of a stolen piece of equipment is \$26,765.*



# Recovery Rates

Low recovery rates make it difficult to draw concrete conclusions from recovery statistics alone. By including information from investigations, such as those in the “Case Studies” section, we can gain an idea of how equipment is stolen (page 18), where it goes, and who steals it. The NICB compiled 11,493 reports of stolen machines in 2015. Conversely, in 2015, the NICB reported 2,552 recoveries of equipment listed in the NCIC active theft file. The file includes all active thefts recovered in 2015.



Only 22 percent of stolen equipment was recovered in 2015.

## NOTES

1. Of the 11,493 reported equipment thefts in 2015, NCIC reported 2,552 recoveries.
2. The recovery rate does not reflect pieces of equipment that law enforcement recovered but did not mark as recovered.
3. The recovery rate does not reflect unreported thefts.

## ANALYSIS

A number of factors contribute to the low recovery rate of stolen equipment:

- delays in discovery of thefts and subsequent delays between time of occurrence and reporting
- equipment owner’s inaccurate or nonexistent ownership records
- complex and often ambiguous equipment identification number formats
- lack of prepurchase screening of used equipment
- limited law enforcement resources dedicated to equipment investigations
- limited, possibly inaccurate equipment information in law enforcement systems
- police reporting and search errors along with misunderstanding of correct equipment theft reporting practices
- NCIC equipment information reporting errors in which equipment is erroneously added to the “article file” rather than the “vehicle file”

## COMMENT

When it comes to improving theft recoveries, the area that needs the most improvement is also the area that promises immediate results: making accurate information available to law enforcement 24 hours a day through NER and the NICB. At a minimum, equipment owners should keep accurate lists of equipment with PIN/serial numbers and submit them to law enforcement, their insurers, and NER as soon they discover a theft. When they purchase equipment, owners should register serial numbers in the NER database, so that the information is available to law enforcement 24 hours a day. In the event of a theft, law enforcement can identify the equipment even during weekends or at night.

# Recovery by State

## Top Ten States for Equipment Recovery

Rank	State	Recoveries
1	Texas	386
2	California	287
3	Florida	154
4	North Carolina	124
5	South Carolina	119
6	Georgia	106
7	Oklahoma	89
8	Missouri	84
9	Arkansas	72
10	Tennessee	67

The top ten states account for 58% of recoveries.

## NOTES

1. In 2015, law enforcement recovered most machines in the same state where they were stolen.
2. The bigger the state and the more demand for equipment within that state, the lower the chance that the equipment will leave the state.
3. If thieves do not sell equipment quickly in the local vicinity, there's a greater chance they'll move equipment out of state, especially as more time passes since the date of the theft.
4. Law enforcement is less likely to recover equipment when thieves move it far away, especially out of state. Therefore, more stolen equipment may be moving out of state.

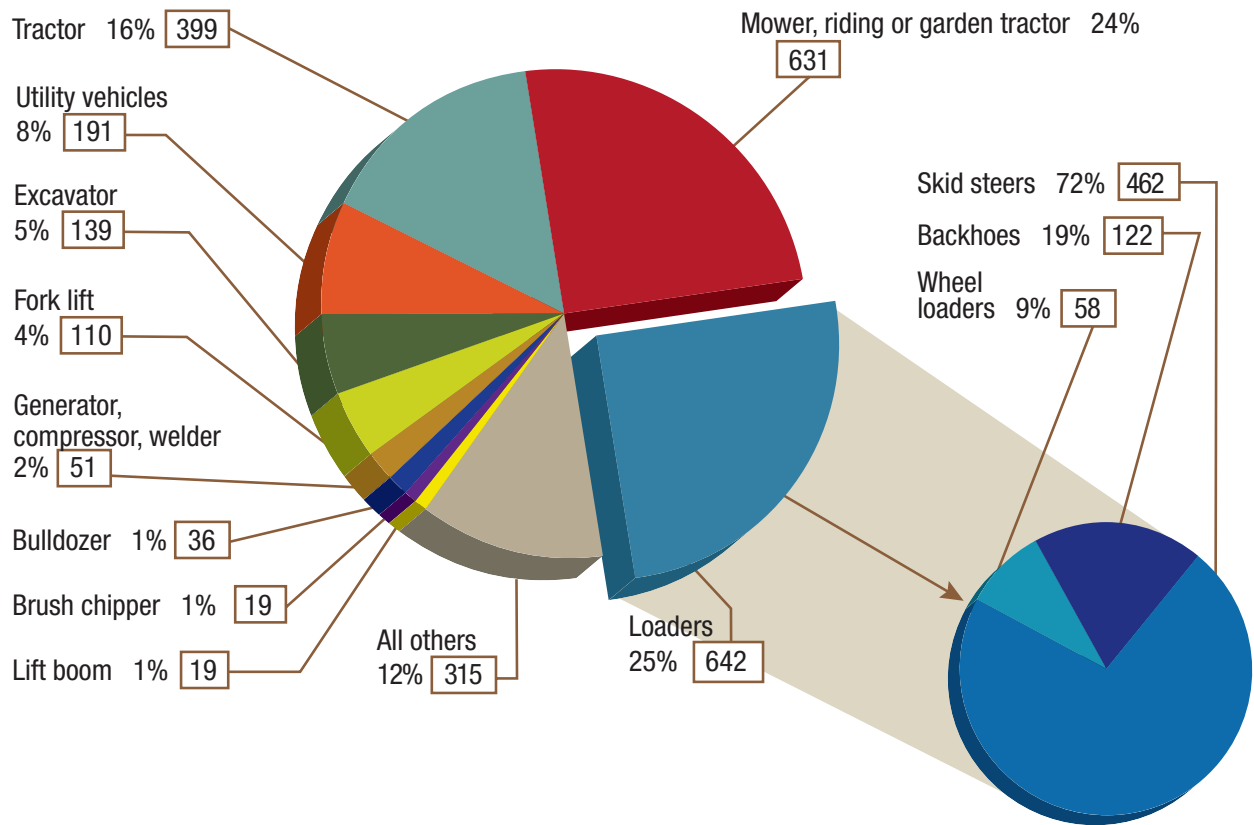
## ANALYSIS

1. A low level of surveillance in the used-equipment market bolsters thieves' confidence to commit crimes. They feel safe selling equipment in neighboring states or even as close as neighboring counties.
2. Recoveries made at ports and borders prove that thieves do export stolen equipment; however, selling stolen equipment within the United States is easier and cheaper. The cost of export is worthwhile only when thieves can raise prices abroad or when they steal equipment close to a border.

## COMMENT

In the fight against equipment theft, it's important to act both locally (for example, by circulating theft reports) and nationally (for example, by submitting data to national databases). A key component in the fight is to make it harder for thieves to sell stolen equipment. Buyers of used equipment should check machines at [www.IRONcheck.com](http://www.IRONcheck.com) before buying.

# Types of Equipment Recovered



## NOTES

1. The “Loader” category includes all subclasses: front-end, tracked, wheeled, skid steer, and backhoe.
2. The “Excavator” category includes both full-size and compact or mini excavators.

## ANALYSIS

The types of equipment recovered most are usually the types of equipment stolen most. The gap between theft and recovery narrows as NICB training encourages law enforcement to look more closely at the machines stolen more frequently.

# Recovery by Manufacturer

Rank	Manufacturer	Recoveries
1	John Deere	586
2	Kubota Tractor Corp.	277
3	Bobcat	233
4	Caterpillar	224
5	Case	98
6	Toro	44
7	Husqvarna	41
7	New Holland	41
7	Cub Cadet Corp.	41
10	Exmark	37

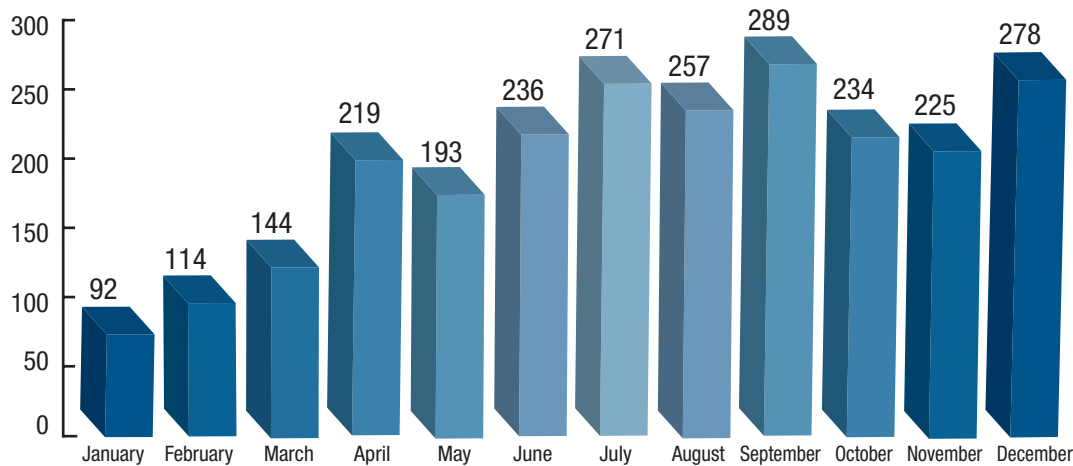
## NOTES

1. Source is the total number of recoveries of equipment stolen in 2015.
2. There was a three-way tie for 7th place between the manufacturers Husqvarna, New Holland, and Cub Cadet Corp., with 41 recoveries.

## ANALYSIS

The top five manufacturers account for 56% of all recoveries. The make of recovered equipment closely mirrors the make of stolen equipment.

# Recovery by Month



## NOTES

1. Source is the total number of recoveries of equipment stolen in 2015.

## ANALYSIS

As the busy construction and farming seasons slow down and jobs near completion, job sites become safer and more accessible to law enforcement. Larger equipment is generally idle at this point, and even smaller units begin to sit for longer periods as finishing work is done. It's not uncommon for contractors using stolen equipment to abandon or leave it behind at the end of a job because maintenance and storage may be more costly than stealing a new machine next year.



## Model Year of Equipment Recovered

Year	Recoveries
2015	415
2014	315
2013	204
2012	197
2011	112
2010	122
2008	123
2007	119
2006	103
2005	108

### NOTES

1. Source is the total number of recoveries of equipment stolen in 2015. Each piece of equipment manufactured in 2014 faced potential theft for only part of the year, from the date sold to December 31.
2. Results may be skewed slightly because owners often misstate the date of manufacture. For example, a buyer may list a 2010 model purchased in 2011 as a 2011 model.

### ANALYSIS

Newer equipment draws more attention from both law enforcement and thieves. It's not uncommon for older equipment to sit unused in lots or yards, but newer equipment is more likely to be noticed as out-of-place by officers.

## Top Ten Cities for Equipment Recovery

City	State	Recoveries
Houston	TX	52
Bakersfield	CA	28
Miami	FL	27
San Antonio	TX	22
Palos Heights	IL	20
Fresno	CA	20
Dallas	TX	17
Riverside	CA	17
Corpus Christi	TX	16
McKinney	TX	15

### NOTES

1. Source is the total number of equipment recoveries in 2015.
2. If a thief does not sell the equipment immediately in the local area, there's a greater likelihood that, as more time passes, the thief will move equipment out of state and sell it to a purchaser who seems to have no knowledge of the theft.
3. Palos Heights, IL, and Fresno, CA, are tied for 5th place; and Dallas, TX, and Riverside, CA, are tied for 7th place.

### ANALYSIS

Recoveries tend to be localized near high-theft areas, suggesting that a good deal of stolen equipment doesn't move far. This may be due to the rules of supply and demand: where there is equipment to steal, there are machines that are needed. Unfortunately, not all high-theft areas have high recoveries. Areas with proper funding, training, and dedicated heavy-equipment task forces have much higher recovery rates. It's interesting to note California's significant presence on this list. This state's mandatory statewide registration programs provide law enforcement with many opportunities to access equipment and, therefore, make recoveries.

# Key Statistics

The following numbers give a snapshot of NER and NICB operations as of December 31, 2015.

**11,841,849** Number of ownership records

**\$7,226,629** Value of items recovered by law enforcement with the help of the NICB and NER in 2015

**\$26,765** Average value of machines recovered by police with the NICB and NER assistance

**114,789** Theft reports in NER database

**11,657** Fleets with equipment registered with NER

**2,888** Law enforcement officers trained by the NICB on heavy-equipment investigations in 2015

**270** Recoveries made by law enforcement with the help of the NICB and NER in 2015

**25** States in which the NICB conducted training in 2015

**48** Number of insurance companies or agencies offering incentives to register equipment on NER's database

# Case Studies

## Case Study 1

On April 29, 2016, seven individuals were arrested in Shelby County, Indiana, after a lengthy investigation by multiple law enforcement agencies. The case involved a specialized theft group that had been operating in central Indiana. These arrests were just the latest in the investigation, which began in late 2014 and continued until early 2016.

This investigation—which found victims throughout central and south central Indiana—resulted in the recovery of stolen equipment and property valued at \$1.3 million. The thefts dated back to 2008, and the stolen/recovered equipment and vehicles included skid-steer loaders, backhoes, a dozer, mini excavators, a large commercial excavator, multiple all-terrain vehicles, compact tractors with implements, commercial mowers, multiple trailers, pickup trucks, heavy-duty trucks, and two Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

Thirty-eight individuals have been charged or arrested in this investigation, which included the use of NICB Special Operation Funds by law enforcement to facilitate undercover purchases of stolen equipment. Even today, this investigation is yielding additional leads to criminal activity related to person(s) within and outside of this group. The investigation was successful thanks to the collaboration of the Shelby County Sheriff's Department, Hancock County Sheriff's Department, Johnson County Sheriff's Department, Shelbyville Police Department, Indiana State Police Auto Theft Section, Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department, and respective Indiana Prosecutors' Offices. ■

## Case Study 2

In November 2015, NICB Special Agent Mark Collins assisted the Collin County Sheriff's Department, McKinney Police Department, and Pilot Point Police Department as the agencies executed a search warrant in Pilot Point, Texas. The case began when a man

contacted County Sheriff's Detective Walter Clifton, saying that he suspected the Takeuchi TL230 skid loader he had purchased might be stolen. Detective Clifton found the loader had been reported stolen to the McKinney Police Department in August. He contacted Detective Chris Ware of the Collin County Sheriff's Department and told him of the loader's location near McKinney, Texas. Detective Ware traveled to the location, confirmed the identity of the loader, and interviewed the owner, who stated he had purchased the loader from a man named Hector Delgado Castorena. A search warrant was obtained and executed in November, and Castorena was arrested for first-degree felony theft and placed in the Denton County Jail. ■

## Case Study 3

On a Saturday afternoon, a customer called after a rental store had closed, because the contractor for whom she had rented a skid loader had disappeared and taken the equipment with him. He was not returning calls and had not returned to her property as planned. Feeling that it was a strange situation, she followed her intuition, filing a police report and contacting Nickell Equipment Rental and Sales in Fayetteville, Georgia.

On Monday by 8 a.m., the rental company was able to locate the unit using IRONwatch®, the National Equipment Register's equipment tracking system. They contacted the Coweta County Police Department, where the report was filed and the theft had occurred.

Even though the case hadn't yet been assigned, by the next morning Detective Kevin Yarbrough of the Coweta County Police reached out to the local police department where IRONwatch had located the equipment. Detective Yarbrough met the second department on-site, where the rental company sent a truck and picked up its equipment. The hired contractor—who was found with multiple pieces of stolen equipment—is now in custody. ■

# Summary

Although complete statistics do not exist, it's clear from available data that equipment theft is a serious problem. Estimates derived from data in this year's report suggest the total value of stolen equipment in 2015 is close to \$300 million. Those numbers do not include losses from business interruption, such as short-term rental costs, project-delay penalties, and wasted workforce and management time. By frequency of loss, theft is a greater problem than any other type of equipment risk.

Equipment theft levels coincide with the amount of equipment in a particular area. The states with the highest volume of construction and agriculture report the largest number of thefts.

Mobility and value of equipment are the lead contributors to theft. Most thefts are from work sites with little or no security. Given two similar types of machines, a thief will steal the newer one because it's more valuable. In contrast to the automobile industry, there's little difference in equipment security between a new machine and one made several years ago.

Law enforcement recovers as little as 20% of stolen equipment. Recovery locations and types closely mirror theft locations and types.

# Conclusion

Equipment owners and insurers should increase risk management for easily transportable, high-value equipment.

Both equipment security and work site security are necessary to prevent theft. Work site security is especially critical because equipment often sits in areas with little or no physical security.

Officers investigating equipment theft should focus on popular targets and look for red flags, such as unusual location, type of transport, missing decals, altered paint, and especially, missing identification plates.

The area that needs the most improvement is also the area that promises immediate results: supplying accurate information to law enforcement 24 hours a day through NER and the NICB.