



Press Release: Vehicle Theft Arrests

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Since August of 2026, the Joplin Police Department has been responding to an alarming number of vehicle thefts and thefts from vehicles. Joplin Police Officers and Detectives discovered that the majority of these reports involved Kia and Hyundai vehicles that had been manufactured between the years of 2005-2018. Since the start of the reports, the Joplin Police Department has responded to 20 motor vehicle thefts and 22 thefts from vehicles involving the above-mentioned model vehicles since mid-August. Noticing this was a trending crime, the Joplin Police Department began a more thorough review.

The Joplin Police Department Flex Platoon was assigned to investigate these thefts. During this investigation, primary suspects were developed and identified. The suspects were found to be juveniles who live in Joplin. Flex Detectives further learned that the juveniles had stolen firearms left in unoccupied vehicles they had broken into. Evidence was obtained that suggested that the firearms were recklessly used and discharged by the juveniles during the commission of those crimes. No injuries were reported because of the gunfire.

In late September of 2026, Joplin Patrol Officers located and arrested three juveniles in two separate incidents involving stolen vehicles. In one of the incidents, a stolen vehicle was occupied by two juvenile suspects. When officers attempted to stop the stolen vehicle, it fled resulting in the stolen vehicle crashing into a parked car near the intersection of 8th and Grand. Both juveniles then fled the scene on foot and were taken into custody a short distance away. In the second incident, a stolen vehicle was stopped for traffic violations near 7th Street and Geneva, the juvenile driver was taken into custody without incident.

JOPLIN

POLICE DEPARTMENT



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Flex Detectives continued to work closely with patrol officers during the ongoing investigation. As additional evidence and information were acquired, detectives were able to obtain three search warrants for residences believed to be involved with these vehicle thefts. On October 1, 2026, the Joplin officers and Investigators served these search warrants.

When the search warrants were served, two stolen firearms were recovered along with ammunition. Marijuana, drug paraphernalia, tools used to break into vehicles, and miscellaneous vehicle ignition parts were located during the searches. Additionally, a 2016 Kia Soul that had been stolen the night before was also recovered at one of the residences. As a result of this investigation, a total of five juveniles with age ranges from thirteen to sixteen have been taken into custody in conjunction with the reported thefts and were transported to the Jasper County Juvenile Detention Center. Charges for 2nd Degree Burglary and stealing were submitted to the Jasper County Juvenile Prosecutor. Additional charges may be considered as the investigation continues. Nineteen of the twenty vehicles stolen during the time frame have been recovered.

The Joplin Police Department wants to thank the Jasper County Juvenile Office for their continued partnership with helping make the Joplin community safer.

To help reduce the chances of being a victim, the Joplin Police Department wants to remind citizens to securely lock and remove all loose items from parked vehicles, especially firearms. Additionally, if you have a Kia or Hyundai vehicle that was manufactured during the years 2005-2018, it is also recommended that a steering wheel locking mechanism be utilized when the vehicle remains unattended.