

Catalytic Converter Thefts on the Rise

By, Kiel Rushton, Police Officer and Detective

Fall 2021 is here— and what a year it has been! The change in seasons represents the closing of another chapter of time, and the promise of a new beginning right around the corner.

Unfortunately, some things remain the same. Motor vehicle theft and tampering continues to be an issue. With precious metal prices at all-time highs, the Twin Cities Metro has seen an incredible surge in catalytic converter thefts.

Catalytic converters are a target for theft: expensive to repair, replace. A catalytic converter can cost thousands of dollars to repair or replace. Typically, only comprehensive insurance plans will cover damage.

Every modern-day vehicle has a catalytic converter which functions as a part of the emissions system. The converter is located on the “exhaust pipe” of a vehicle. It uses precious metals, such as rhodium, platinum, and palladium to convert harmful and dangerous catalysts from gasoline that may not have been burned during the ignition and combustion process inside of a vehicle’s engine.

What can be done to deter theft of catalytic converters

Preventing a theft is the best way to solve theft issues. Ideally, every vehicle would be secured inside with impenetrable security and 24/7 surveillance in 4K resolution. Since not all of us can win the lottery (and money trees have not yet been developed), we suggest that you try to park under a street light and close to your location.

There are also devices that are widely available at auto parts stores and online that help secure your catalytic converter to your car. These devices range in price and in capability, so make sure to do your research and pay attention to online buyer ratings. Other police agencies have gone as far as to spray paint the converter itself; however, intelligence suggests that this may only deter a small number of thieves. If you’re going to do so, use engine enamel or heat-resistant paint in bright colors. And please use caution as exhaust temperatures hover between 600-900 degrees. Thieves tend to provide clues that might help deter or stop a theft. Of course, anyone crawling under your car should be the biggest clue. Should you witness any combination of the following conditions, please call 911 immediately:

- Those who are actively taking catalytic converters will wear gloves, and have very dirty clothing from being on the ground and handling auto parts.
- The 100% tool of choice is a reciprocating saw or what is commonly known as a “sawzall.”
- You may also see a car pull alongside your car in a lot or on the street, and see a passenger exit with a saw, or even a floor jack.
- COVID-19 masks have been a favorite of thieves to wear— they’re able to obscure their face without alarming others to their misdeeds. *Catalytic Converter Thefts on the Rise continued on page 9—*



Catalytic Converter Thefts on the Rise continued—

The SAPD operates on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, all at @StAnthonyPolice. On these platforms, we have shown several videos on catalytic converter theft. Our most recent video demonstrates a catalytic converter harvesting.

Report suspicious activity— as it happens

Your officers take these thefts seriously and investigate them to the fullest degree. Officers have made arrests, seized vehicles and evidence obtained through search warrants, and have uncovered more evidence as a result of their investigations. Although the converters themselves are often not recovered (or recovered in a state of disrepair), the perpetrators who commit these acts are brought to justice— as much, and as often as the law allows. We will continue to advocate for your community by holding suspects accountable for their actions. We encourage you to report suspicious activity as soon as it happens, so that together, we can maintain a safe community for everyone to enjoy. ■