



UNION COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

BEHIND THE STAR

SHERIFF MALCUM J. "JAMIE" PATTON



## *Catalytic Converter Thefts Increase*

The Union County Sheriff's Office continues to see frequent catalytic converter thefts. A catalytic converter is part of your vehicle's exhaust system that converts harmful engine-exhaust pollutants into something less harmful to the environment through a chemical reaction. Catalytic converters come in different shapes and sizes and are positioned between the engine and the muffler underneath your vehicle. Thieves target catalytic converters because they contain precious metals, like platinum, palladium, or rhodium. The converters are often sold to scrapyards or metal recycling plants. Thieves can make anywhere from \$25.00 to \$300.00 for a standard catalytic converter, and converters from hybrid vehicles can sell for up to \$1,400.00.



(Photo Credit: Cape Breton Regional Police)

The most popular vehicle models suffering from catalytic converter thefts are the Toyota Prius, Honda Element, and Honda CR-V. In addition, trucks and sport utility vehicles are attractive targets for these thefts due to the ease at which thieves can access the under carriage of the vehicle. "In less than thirty seconds, a thief can climb under your vehicle, use a battery-operated saw, cut off your catalytic converter, and be gone from the scene," said Deputy Richard Crabtree, crime prevention specialist at the Sheriff's Office. How do you know if your catalytic converter has been stolen? The following are a few ways you can tell:

1. Your check engine light appears on the dashboard
2. Plumes of black smoke coming from the exhaust pipe
3. Extremely loud noises, particularly when starting the engine or accelerating
4. Difficulty getting the engine to start and difficulty with acceleration

“We’ve already seen a 41% increase in catalytic converter thefts in 2022, compared to 2021, and we want our residents to be aware this is a problem in our community, and that it can be very expensive to fix,” said Sheriff Jamie Patton. Sheriff’s investigators have been successful in finding and prosecuting some individuals involved in these thefts, but many are related to large theft rings and not isolated incidents.

So, what can you do to avoid becoming a victim of catalytic converter theft?

1. Be careful where you park. If you have to park outside, park in a well illuminated area.
2. Have a vehicle repair shop engrave the Vehicle Identification Number, also known as a VIN, on the actual converter.
3. Purchase and apply bright colored high-temperature automotive spray paint on the converter.
4. Install an anti-theft device on your catalytic converter

For more information, please call the Union County Sheriff’s Office Crime Prevention Bureau at (937) 645-4100, Ext. 4310.