



CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH
CITY COUNCIL MEETING – COUNCIL MEMBER ITEMS REPORT

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: BARBARA DELGLEIZE, MAYOR PRO TEM

DATE: NOVEMBER 16, 2021

SUBJECT: ADOPT AN ORDINANCE TO PROHIBIT THE UNLAWFUL POSSESSION OF CATALYTIC CONVERTERS

California currently leads the nation in catalytic converter thefts, which have increased significantly over the past year. According to a report by State Farm Insurance, more than 3 out of 10 claims for catalytic converter thefts are filed in California, and thefts have risen nationally by 293% in Fiscal Year 2020-21.

Catalytic converters can be found underneath a vehicle and reduce the amount of pollutants released from the exhaust system. However, the precious metals contained inside this auto part (i.e. platinum, palladium or rhodium) make them a valuable commodity on the black market, and the speed with which it can be removed make them an easy and lucrative target.

These thefts create major financial and logistical burdens for our community members, and here in Huntington Beach, the Police Department is well-aware of this trend. Officers have hosted multiple public events to etch identification numbers onto catalytic converters, making them traceable and less attractive on the black market. HBPD has also paired this program with regular outreach and education about parking vehicles in well-lit areas and installing protective cages.

However, it remains difficult to halt the transportation, sale and distribution of catalytic converters within the City's existing laws. Police Officers who spot an individual in possession of an unattached catalytic converter are currently unable to ask for proof of ownership.

While preventative measures are enormously helpful, I believe the City can utilize municipal tools to help reduce the illegal distribution of catalytic converters after they are stolen. An ordinance that allows our Police Officers to require proof of ownership for unattached catalytic converters is one step that the City can take to slow this costly trend.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Direct the City Manager, Police Chief, and City Attorney to draft an ordinance to prohibit the unlawful possession of catalytic converters and present it to the City Council for further consideration.