

CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFT

INFORMATION BULLETIN



Scottsdale Police Department

Crime Prevention Unit

WHAT IS A CATALYTIC CONVERTER?

A catalytic converter is an air pollution abatement device that removes pollutants from motor vehicle exhaust, either by oxidizing them into carbon dioxide and water or reducing them into nitrogen and oxygen.

The catalytic converter device uses a catalyst to convert three harmful compounds in the car exhaust into harmless compounds. The three compounds are:

1. Hydrocarbons
2. Carbon monoxide
3. Nitrogen oxides

In a catalytic converter, the catalyst (in the form of platinum and palladium) is coated onto a ceramic honeycomb or ceramic beads that are housed in a muffler-like package attached to the exhaust pipe. The catalyst helps to convert carbon monoxide into carbon dioxide. It converts the hydrocarbons into carbon dioxide and water. It also converts the nitrogen oxides back into nitrogen and oxygen.

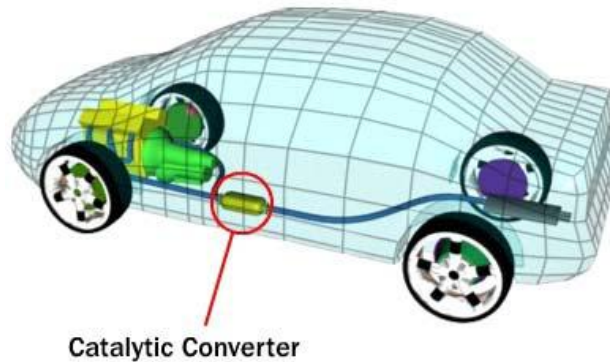


PHOTO FROM "HOW IT WORKS.COM"

WHY ARE CATALYTIC CONVERTERS POPULAR WITH THIEVES?

Converters use the metals Platinum and Palladium as the catalyst. Both of these metals are extremely expensive and provide for high reward versus the risk in committing the theft.

Per CNNMONEY.COM, on 06-10-10: Gold sold for \$1220.80 per troy ounce while Platinum sold for **\$1534.20** per troy ounce.

WHAT DO CATALYTIC CONVERTERS LOOK LIKE?

The following are some very basic photos of converters:

Attached Catalytic Converter



Catalytic Converter Unit



Oxygen Sensors



The converter is between the exhaust system and the engine and is normally in front of the middle of the vehicle. As shown above, there are normally oxygen sensor ports either on the converter or two placed on either side of the converter, for testing purposes. This should help distinguish between a muffler and converter.

HOW ARE CONVERTERS REMOVED FROM VEHICLES?

The converters are fairly simple to remove with any metal cutting instrument. Battery powered cutting tools seem to be the tools of choice for this type of crime.





With a little more work the converter can also be removed with a hand held metal cutting instrument.

WHAT IS THE MOST TARGETED VEHICLE?

Since every vehicle has some type of converter on it, EVERY vehicle could be targeted. At this time the most common vehicles attracting converter thieves are pick-up trucks and SUVs. These vehicles seem to be the easiest to get under and remove the converter due to the configuration of the underside of the vehicle.

WHERE ARE THESE THEFTS TAKING PLACE?

Thieves seem to be targeting highly populated parking locations such as:

- Larger parking lots -Apartment complexes-Condo complexes
- Street Parking

HOW CAN CITIZENS COMBAT THIS PROBLEM?

Theft of catalytic converters is hard to stop. Use the following ideas to help protect your property:

- Mark your converter with VIN# so it can be traced if located
- Park in a garage or a well lit area.
- When you see suspicious activity, call the police right away. Call 911 if a theft is in progress. Call 480-312-5000 for non-emergencies.

For more information call your Crime Prevention Officer at:

District 1 – Jen Wattier – 480-312-0275 (McKellips to Osborn)

District 2 – Craig Abernethy – 480-861-4028 (Osborn to McDonald)

District 3 – Kory Sneed – 480-312-5696 (McDonald to Cactus)

District 4 – Jason Glenn – 480-312-8802 (Cactus to north city limits)