

RISK SIMPLIFIED

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Catalytic Converter Theft Mitigation

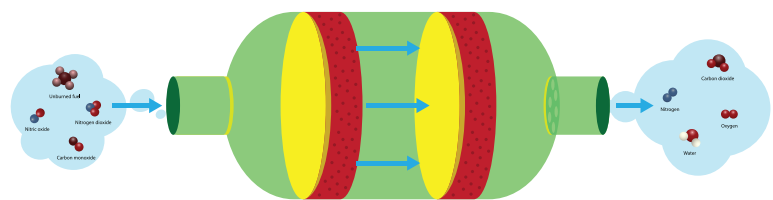
by Scarlett Sadler

Over the last few years, reports of catalytic converter thefts have skyrocketed due to the value of the precious metals they contain. Many reports have indicated that police departments across the country have dealt with an exponential spike in catalytic converter thefts. It takes approximately 60 seconds for an adept thief to steal a catalytic converter, and the higher the vehicle is off the ground, the easier the process is. Thieves take these stolen catalytic converters to scrap yards where they can trade in the catalytic converter for roughly \$100 to \$150 per converter. The scrapyard then strips the metals out of the catalytic converter, sells them, and makes a significant profit.

So what does a catalytic converter do?

A catalytic converter is attached to a vehicle's exhaust system and removes chemicals harmful to the environment using a honeycomb-like structure made up of the precious metals palladium, platinum, and rhodium. These three elements act as catalysts that burn off harmful substances in a vehicle's exhaust gasses, such as carbon monoxide, nitric oxide, nitrogen dioxide, and hydrocarbons, into less harmful substances like carbon dioxide and water vapor.

In a modern-day vehicle, a catalytic converter can be located underneath the vehicle towards the exhaust outlet at the vehicle's center, a prime location that thieves easily access.



CATALYTIC CONVERTER

There are various types of catalytic converters. All vehicles made after 1974 have a catalytic converter, which means that agencies should be taking basic precautions to protect all vehicles from thieves, especially during the current state of the market. Due to high demand when the supply chain has been affected, catalytic converters can be costlier to replace and even more difficult for agencies to locate a vendor to purchase a replacement catalytic converter.



There are some basic preventative steps that an agency can take to thwart thieves and protect their property. They are:

- Park all agency vehicles behind secured access points such as a gated facility or a parking garage and limit unauthorized access
- Avoid parking agency vehicles on the street
- Ensure the parking area is well-lit and consider the use of security cameras, if for nothing else than a deterrent
- Increase or enlist overnight security to continuously patrol where vehicles are stored
- Add the vehicle identifier number (VIN) to the catalytic converter. While this does not prevent thefts, it does make the catalytic converter traceable should it be located
- Add a vehicle alarm to all vehicles with high sensitivity detection when vibrations are detected
- Add a barrier that prevents quickly removing the catalytic converter, such as a reinforced cage, steel plate, or double rebar over the catalytic converter
- Utilize a commercial catalytic theft prevention device such as a Cat Clamp or a Cat Strap

If your agency is currently experiencing catalytic convertor theft, we encourage you to review your vehicle storage practices to ensure your agency is taking preventative steps to thwart these thieves. For additional assistance, [please contact PRISM's Risk Control Department.](#)