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San Joaquin County Cracks Down on Catalytic Converter Theft

Would-be thieves will face tougher penalties in San Joaquin County for stealing catalytic converters after the Board of Supervisors approved a new ordinance aimed at curbing the costly crime.

“This is a message to anyone who tries to make a quick buck at the expense of hard-working residents,” said District 4 Supervisor Steve Ding, who proposed the ordinance. “Too many people have had their lives disrupted. They can’t get to work or take their kids to school when their catalytic converter is stolen. This ordinance sends a clear message that the consequences will outweigh the reward, and thieves will think twice before targeting our communities.”

Highlights of the catalytic converter ordinance:

- Classifies catalytic converter theft as a misdemeanor violation punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000, up to six months in County Jail, or both.
- Makes it unlawful to possess a catalytic converter that is not attached to a vehicle unless the individual can provide documentation proving lawful ownership.
- Directs a portion of collected fines into a fund to assist victims of catalytic converter theft.
- Increases penalties for repeat offenders.

“This ordinance gives law enforcement another tool to hold offenders accountable while making it harder to profit from stolen catalytic converters,” Ding said. “It also recognizes the real impact these thefts have on working families by helping support victims.”

Supervisor Ding partnered with Riverside County resident Daryl Terrell, who has been on a statewide mission to strengthen catalytic converter laws.

“We are making a difference one County and one City at a time,” said Terrell. “I want to thank Supervisor Ding for his passion and for joining me in this effort to protect our communities.”

Catalytic converters are a frequent target for thieves because they contain valuable precious metals and can be removed from a vehicle in as little as one minute. Once stolen, they can be sold for as much as \$1,200 each. More than 3,500 stolen catalytic converters have been recovered throughout San Joaquin County, including in Stockton and Lodi.

The ordinance becomes effective 30 days after the adoption by the Board of Supervisors.