

Protecting Our Parishes

Security Awareness Bulletin

Now what's missing – catalytic converter theft an emerging problem?

The thefts were only a sporadic problem nationally until about a year ago but have grown to a near-epidemic, said Frank Scafidi, a spokesman for the National Insurance Crime Bureau.

What is a Catalytic Converter – Converters are pollution control devices that are part of the exhaust system and are located underneath a vehicle usually in line with the muffler and tail pipe.

Why are they so valuable – the pollution-reducing converters contain small amounts of the precious metals including platinum, and they've joined copper wire and bronze on the list of metal items targeted by thieves. Five years ago, platinum traded for about \$608 per troy ounce. Platinum now goes for \$2,083 per troy ounce. Crooks sell the converters to recyclers for anywhere from \$12 to \$140.

How are they stolen – converter thieves can slip under vehicles with battery-powered saws, sometimes in daylight, and in a matter of minutes leave owners with shocking repair bills. Once the converter is stolen the car will sound very loud when started because the muffler will no longer be functional.

Who is at Risk – thieves are targeting people in rural areas, in shopping centers, and just about anywhere cars are found. SUV's, minivans and trucks are the preferred vehicles for catalytic converter thieves, because the vehicles sit up higher and make the part easier to get to.

What you will be left with – a loud vehicle and an inoperable exhaust system. Replacement costs for a catalytic converter can reach \$1300.



How can you help protect your vehicle?

- Be aware of the problem and talk about it with family members, work associates and friends.
- Park in areas that will make it harder for thieves to access your vehicle, for example in guarded, protected or gated parking lots.
- Park your vehicle within earshot of where people will be. If the crooks are using a noisy saw they won't like having people too close when they're doing it.
- Consider having a parking lot attendant during high attendance levels for masses or other special events.
- Report suspicious activity, for example persons underneath a vehicle appearing to be performing maintenance.

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