



City of Bothell™

Bothell Police Department

COMMUNITY ADVISORY Catalytic Converter Theft



The City of Bothell (along with the region and nation) has seen a rise in the theft of catalytic converters from vehicle exhaust systems. While Toyota Priuses are the most common vehicle type being targeted right now, many catalytic converters have been stolen from various other vehicle makes and models.

[Catalytic Converters and why they are targeted by thieves](#)

A catalytic converter is an exhaust emission control device that converts toxic gases and pollutants in exhaust gas from an internal combustion engine into less-toxic pollutants. These devices contain expensive metals such as platinum, rhodium, and palladium, which thieves can sell to scrap yards for several hundred dollars each, depending on the amount and market rate of precious metals contained inside. The replacement of a stolen catalytic converter can cost around \$2,000 and it is unlawful to drive a vehicle on public roads without a catalytic converter. The resulting gap in your exhaust system will also make your vehicle run poorly until repaired.

The rate of catalytic converter theft varies depending on the current prices of the metals inside it. Price increases typically result in an increase in thefts. Thieves look for easy targets when it comes to catalytic converter theft, and a few simple steps help make your car or SUV a less likely target.

Power tools are typically used to cut the catalytic converter free, which produces loud metallic grinding or sawing noises. A skilled thief can cut a catalytic converter free in less than one minute.



Symptoms of Converter Theft

You'll notice a loud rumbling or roaring sound as soon as you turn on the engine if your catalytic converter is missing. This gets louder when you hit the gas. The exhaust is not working properly, so the vehicle also drives rougher than usual, often with a sense of sputtering as you change speed. Go to the back of the car and look underneath. The catalytic converter is a round canister that connects two pieces of piping in the exhaust. You will see a gaping space in the middle of your exhaust if the converter is missing, and you will likely see signs of the piping being cut away.



Preventing Catalytic Converter Theft

If you have a personal garage, keep your car in the garage with the door closed when the vehicle is not in use. When outdoors, park your vehicle in well-lit and visible areas when possible. Park close to a building entrance or to the nearest access road when parking in a public lot. This is due to the increased amount of pedestrian traffic in those areas. Thieves typically use power tools to cut catalytic converters free, which generates loud noises. Vehicles parked in dark and remote areas free of potential witnesses are the preferred targets of thieves.

Security devices are available that attach to the converter, making it harder to steal. Having the converter welded to the car frame also makes it more difficult to remove. The cost to add a security device to your vehicle is substantially less than the cost to replace a stolen catalytic converter. If you have a security system on your car, calibrate it so vibration sets it off. This ensures the alarm activates if a thief tries to saw off the converter. Video surveillance around your garage or driveway is also useful if you have the budget for it. Engraving your VIN number onto your catalytic converter will make it easier to identify in case it does get stolen.



We are asking for the public's help in providing any information about these crimes or the suspects. Please contact the Bothell Police Department at (425) 486-1254 if you have specific information regarding a recent catalytic converter theft.