



COUNTY of VENTURA

Board of Supervisors

**SUPERVISOR
KELLY LONG**
Third District

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April 29, 2025

County of Ventura Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: Recommendation from Supervisor Long to Direct County Counsel to Work With the Ventura County Sheriff's Office to Draft an Ordinance for the Unincorporated Areas Relating to the Unlawful Possession of a Catalytic Converter.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct County Counsel to work with the Ventura County Sheriff's Office to draft an ordinance for the unincorporated areas relating to the unlawful possession of a catalytic converter for our Board's consideration.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact with the initial request for staff to draft an ordinance. It is anticipated that any costs associated with enforcement of the ordinance will be within the Sheriff's existing budget.

DISCUSSION:

Catalytic converter theft has become a major problem in California and throughout the country. The high value of the precious metals, such as rhodium, palladium and platinum, contained within catalytic converters and the ease with which criminals can remove the devices from the vehicles of unsuspecting residents make catalytic converters an enticing target. Catalytic converters can be removed by a thief in as little as a minute and can be sold for as much as \$1,200 each. Victims of catalytic converter thefts can pay thousands of dollars to replace them, and repairs can take months to occur, due to various supply chain issues.

For years catalytic converter thefts were one of the fastest growing crimes in the country. From 2019 through 2023, State Farm Insurance reported a 400% increase nationwide in the number of such thefts. Recent state legislation has had some impact on the number of catalytic converter thefts, which decreased significantly in 2024. However, the impact of the state legislation is limited and does not provide local law enforcement with the mechanisms to make

arrests in many cases. Indeed, law enforcement currently cannot seize a catalytic converter found to have been removed from a vehicle and in someone's possession unless a victim can be identified. Unfortunately, locating the victim without identifying information on the catalytic converter is often impossible. Accordingly, many local agencies in California have begun to pass their own ordinances to assist law enforcement in holding thieves accountable for their crimes. Some of these agencies include the counties of San Bernardino and Riverside and the cities of Los Angeles, Upland and Eastvale. Sheriff Fryhoff supports this effort to deter catalytic converter thefts, noting that with so many other counties and local jurisdictions taking similar action, Ventura County would not want to be seen as a sanctuary for catalytic converter thieves.

Passage of this item would direct the County Counsel to work with the Sheriff's Office to draft an ordinance that would make it unlawful for any person who is not a licensed recycler to possess a catalytic converter that is not attached to a vehicle unless the person has a valid proof-of-ownership of the catalytic converter. However, today's action does not guarantee approval of any proposed ordinance by our Board. Indeed, the proposed ordinance will go through the noticed public hearing process before our Board, providing opportunity for public comment. If ultimately adopted by our Board, it is my hope that the catalytic converter ordinance will be used as a model for our local cities to adopt similar ordinances.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This item promotes the strategic priorities of healthy, safe and resilient communities and economic vitality.

Given the discussion above, I believe that the Board should adopt the recommended action to preserve public safety and strengthen the local economy by deterring these costly thefts. This letter has been reviewed by the County Executive Office, the Auditor-Controller, the Sheriff, and County Counsel.

Sincerely,



Kelly Long
Supervisor, Third District