



Thurston County Sheriff's Office

"Creating a Safer Community Together."

Sheriff Dan Kimball

Community Alert

Date: November 7, 2008

Neighborhood/ Area: Through-out the County

Nature of alert: Catalytic Converter Thefts

Details: The Thurston County Sheriff's Office has seen a recent rash of thefts of vehicle's catalytic converters, particularly in residential areas. Due to the fact that these converters are found in exterior locations and that valuable precious metals including platinum, palladium, and rhodium are used in their construction, converters are a target for thieves. With scrap metal being a common avenue for the criminal element to make money, each of these converters are valuable commodities. The problem is especially common among late-model Toyota trucks and SUVs, due to their high ground clearance and easily-removed bolt-on catalytic converters. Welded-in converters are also at risk of theft from SUVs and trucks, as they can be easily removed with a battery powered reciprocating saw. The saw removal of the converter can often inadvertently damage the car's wiring or fuel line resulting in dangerous consequences.

Thieves can get \$40 to \$100 for a converter from an unscrupulous scrap metal dealer. Toyota 4Runners are particular targets -- not only do their catalytic converters contain plenty of platinum, their high ground clearance makes them particularly easy targets. A thief with a socket wrench can remove a 4Runner's converter in minutes.

Since thieves crawl under the vehicle to remove the converter, it is easy to hide while the crime is taking place. Most victims report that they didn't hear anything during the night - leading us to believe that speed wrenches or normal hand tools are used around residences. Each unit weighs less than 8 pounds, and is easily lifted and moved.

The nature of this crime makes repeat occurrences attractive, since the converter needs to be replaced for the vehicle to be operated. The only real way to protect against the crime is to make sure that the vehicle is stored inside.

Since many of us don't have the option of storing our vehicles inside, it is important to remember that lighting is a thief's enemy. Make sure that you have adequate outdoor lighting illuminating your driveway or vehicle storage area. Report any suspicious

activity by calling 911 immediately. Know who your neighbors are and consider forming a Neighborhood Watch program.

For information on forming a Neighborhood Watch, contact the Thurston County Sheriff's Office Community Outreach Division at (360) 786-5855.

Photo (if necessary/ available): None

Contact info: If you have any information, please call the Sheriff's Office at 360-786-5500 or Crime Stoppers 493-2222.