



Safety, Wellness, & Youth Committee Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: HONORABLE COMMITTEE MEMBERS **DATE: SEPTEMBER 18, 2024**
FROM: POLICE DEPARTMENT **WARDS: ALL**
**SUBJECT: CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFT - RIVERSIDE MUNICIPAL CODE
ORDINANCE PROPOSAL**

ISSUE:

Discuss and conceptually approve proposed changes to the Riverside Municipal Code to add Chapter 9.29 – Unlawful Possession of Catalytic Converters

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Safety, Wellness & Youth Committee recommend that the City Council approve the addition of Riverside Municipal Code Chapter 9.29 prohibiting the unlawful possession of catalytic converters in the City of Riverside.

BACKGROUND:

The theft of catalytic converters has increased significantly in cities across California and the nation. Catalytic converter theft is popular because of the value of precious metals contained within the catalytic converter, the ease of removing the catalytic converter from a vehicle, and the ease of selling the item to scrap metal dealers for cash.

Catalytic converters from all vehicles sold prior to January 1, 2024, were not required to have serial numbers. This creates a scenario where an individual in possession of a stolen catalytic converter may be stopped by the police, but enforcement action cannot be taken because it is very difficult for the officer to prove the item is stolen.

DISCUSSION:

Catalytic converter thieves move across jurisdictional lines and in many cases are committing other crimes such as auto theft. Catalytic converter theft is challenging for law enforcement because of the lack of serial numbers or other identifying information on a catalytic converter which can positively identify the item as stolen.

Under current state law, an individual stopped by police while possessing less than nine catalytic converters does not need to show proof of ownership. If an officer makes contact with

an individual possessing eight or less catalytic converters but cannot identify a specific victim, who then must be able to positively identify the catalytic converter as theirs, then the officer may have to release the individual along with the catalytic converter(s).

The inability to identify the victims of catalytic converter thefts inhibits the ability to successfully prosecute individuals for thefts. The proposed Ordinance is necessary to provide the City of Riverside, in conjunction with the County of Riverside and surrounding cities, with an additional tool to protect the public, deter this criminal activity, and promote a more productive use of law enforcement resources.

The ordinance as proposed will help protect the citizens of Riverside and assist law enforcement by establishing a zero-tolerance policy for catalytic converter theft, establishing sanctions for possessing stolen catalytic converters, preventing offenders from profiting from the sale of catalytic converters, preventing recycling centers from purchasing unlawfully obtained catalytic converters, providing indirect justice to the victims of catalytic converter theft, and minimizing the fiscal and personnel impact to the City of Riverside in deterring and investigating catalytic converter thefts.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This item contributes to **Strategic Priority 2 — Community Well-Being**, specifically, Goal 2.4 to Support programs and innovations that enhance community safety, encourage neighborhood engagement, and build public trust.

The item aligns with each of the five Cross-Cutting Threads as follows:

1. **Community Trust** — The ordinance is being proposed to the City Council to protect the citizens of Riverside and assist law enforcement by establishing a zero-tolerance policy for catalytic converter theft. It is being discussed with this Committee for public input and transparency.
2. **Equity** — The proposed ordinance will provide law enforcement with an additional tool to help ensure that every member of the community will be protected.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** — No additional funding is required due to the proposed ordinance.
4. **Innovation** — The City continually analyzes timely and reliable information in order to develop informed policies and impellent new programs that meet the community's changing needs.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** — The proposed ordinance will enhance the City's preparedness for the future.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by: Kevin Kauk, Police Lieutenant

Approved by: Larry Gonzalez, Chief of Police
Certified as to
availability of funds: Kristie Thomas, Finance Director/Assistant Chief Financial Officer
Approved by: Mike Futrell, City Manager
Approved as to form: Phaedra A. Norton, City Attorney

Attachment: Proposed Municipal Code