



City Council Memorandum

City Arts & Innovation

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

DATE: JANUARY 7, 2025

FROM: RIVERSIDE POLICE DEPARTMENT

WARDS: ALL

SUBJECT: ADOPT AN ORDINANCE AMENDING MUNICIPAL CODE TO ADD CHAPTER 9.29 PROHIBITION OF UNLAWFUL POSSESSION OF CATALYTIC CONVERTERS IN THE CITY OF RIVERSIDE

ISSUE:

Adopt an ordinance to amend the Riverside Municipal Code to add Chapter 9.29 prohibiting the unlawful possession of catalytic converters in the City of Riverside.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council adopt an ordinance to amend the Riverside Municipal Code to add Chapter 9.29 prohibiting the unlawful possession of catalytic converters in the City of Riverside.

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCE:

On December 3, 2024, the City Council introduced an ordinance to amend the Municipal Code to add Chapter 9.29 prohibiting the unlawful possession of catalytic converters. The vote was 7 ayes and 0 noes.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Safety, Wellness, and Youth Committee met on September 18, 2024, with Chair Perry, Vice Chair Conder, and Member Mill present to consider the addition of Riverside Municipal Code Chapter 9.29 prohibiting the unlawful possession of catalytic converters in the City of Riverside. After discussion, the Committee unanimously voted to recommend that 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:

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.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by: Kevin Kauk, Police Lieutenant
Approved by: Larry Gonzalez, Chief of Police

Attachment: Ordinance