



Press Release

PR22 – 063

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DATE: September 15, 2022

CHINO HILLS CITY COUNCIL UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTS ORDINANCE TO COMBAT CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFTS IN CHINO HILLS

Chino Hills, CA – Communities across Southern California are experiencing an increase in catalytic converter thefts. The City of Chino Hills and Chino Hills Police Department continue to proactively take steps to address the issue and reduce the chance of theft in the City. At the September 13, 2022, Council Meeting, the Chino Hills City Council unanimously voted to adopt an ordinance making it unlawful to possess used catalytic converters that are not attached to a vehicle unless a person can provide documentation or proof of lawful possession.

Catalytic converters are the exhaust emission control device located on the underside of a vehicle that reduce toxic gases and pollutants in the exhaust. Converters contain precious metals such as platinum, palladium, and rhodium, which are then melted down to extract valuable metals. Catalytic converters can be stolen from a vehicle in 15 minutes or less and thieves can receive an average of \$75-\$150 per converter from metal recyclers.

“Stolen catalytic converters are a regional and even state-wide issue affecting many of our residents and local businesses,” said Mayor Ray Marquez. “It is important for us as a City Council to reduce the chances of these crimes occurring in our City by ensuring our Police Department has the necessary tools and laws in place to combat and prosecute these crimes.”

Currently, law enforcement’s ability to protect the public and punish catalytic converter theft is very limited. In California, a Police Officer who encounters an individual in possession of a catalytic converter must locate the rightful owner before making an arrest. If the Police Officer cannot locate the rightful owner, the person in possession of the catalytic converter may be released.

Under the new City ordinance, it will be unlawful for any person to possess any used catalytic converter that is not attached to a vehicle. If a person is found in possession, they must provide valid documentation or other proof to verify they are in lawful possession of the catalytic converter. While this ordinance helps to address the issue at a local level, the City of Chino Hills continues to support and advocate for bills with additional layers of protection for victims and stricter enforcement laws needed at the State level.

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“Our City Council recognizes that catalytic converter thefts are a problem and the challenges our department faces in enforcing and prosecuting the individuals,” said Police Chief Garth Goodell. “We appreciate our partnership with the City of Chino Hills and their dedication to ensuring we have the tools needed to enforce catalytic converter theft and prosecute these individuals to the fullest extent of the law. This ordinance highlights the collaborative effort between the City of Chino Hills, the Chino Hills City Council and the Chino Hills Police Department, and sends a clear message to criminals, this crime will not be tolerated in our community.”

The adoption of the new catalytic converter ordinance is just one of the many steps the City of Chino Hills and Chino Hills Police Department are taking to proactively combat these crimes. In June 2022, the Chino Hills Police Department spearheaded a multi-agency catalytic converter operation to combat the unlawful trafficking of stolen catalytic converters which resulted in the seizure of 112 catalytic converters and 28 arrests. The City and Police Department also previously held a catalytic converter etching event in collaboration with Precision Sound to etch identification numbers onto catalytic converters to make them traceable and help deter thieves.

While this law is a great tool in combating catalytic converter thefts and makes Chino Hills a less attractive place to commit this crime, it is difficult to prevent completely. The City and Police Department remind residents to park their vehicles in their garages or well-lit areas at night as well as consider having their catalytic converters engraved with an identification number or having a mechanic install a cage or shield around the converter. For questions or more information, please contact the Chino Hills Police Department at (909) 364-2000.

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