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# CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFT PREVENTION AND OUTREACH



TERRY O'NEILL  
ENGINEERING AND RESEARCH BRANCH  
BAR ADVISORY GROUP MEETING  
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## CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFT

- Reported to be about 1,600 converter thefts per month statewide.
- Theft of an under-vehicle converter takes only minutes with basic tools such as a pipe wrench or cordless Sawzall.
- Targeted vehicles are typically Toyota and Honda products. The converters on these vehicles are commonly certified as a Super Low Emission Vehicle and coated with precious metals such as Rhodium which has a value at over \$14,000 per ounce.
- Repair cost can be as much as \$4,000 and commonly include damage to surrounding pipes, wiring and oxygen sensors.

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# MANY CONVERTERS ARE EASILY ACCESSIBLE



# RECOVERED TOOLS AND HARDWARE



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# CONVERTER THEFT CHALLENGES

Converter thefts have created challenges in these areas:

- **Repair Procedures**

A shortage of converters has resulted in emergency repair considerations.

- **Theft Prevention Device Education**

Converter theft prevention devices appearing on the market are potentially unsafe or may result in a Smog Check failure if not properly installed.

- **Smog Check Testing Procedures**

Temporarily approved alternative converters are outside of the normal Executive Order (EO) number lookup procedures. Additionally, theft prevention devices and converter identification etching may result in Smog Check failures.

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## CONVERTER REPLACEMENT ALTERNATIVES

- Aftermarket converter with an appropriate Executive Order (EO) number. Consumers are finding limited applications and that no parts have been approved for their vehicle.
- Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) converter from the dealer. Consumers are finding that some converters are on back order with no reasonable supply date.
- The State Referee is seeing as many as 500 vehicles per month that an OEM or aftermarket converter is not available as a result of theft.

# CONVERTER REPLACEMENT ALTERNATIVES (CONTINUED)

- If the State Referee finds that the needed part is on an extended back order, a converter that is identified by CARB as closely resembling the unavailable OEM part may be allowed. This process is only utilized when the State Referee finds unacceptable converter shortages.

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA**  
Bureau of Automotive Repair  
VEHICLE INFORMATION LABEL

9/1/2021  
DATE  
XXX1XXXX  
SITE

**N030556**

YR/MK/MDL: 2006 HONDA ACCORD  
ENG. YR/MK/SIZE: 2006/HONDA/2.40L  
FUEL IND.: FUEL INJECTION  
REQ. ECS: PCV, EVAP, EGR, CCO, O2, CAT, SPK, MIL  
COMMENTS: D-182-64 82812 is OK. Mid-bed O2 sensor.

TYPE: P CA/FED: CA  
TRANS: A GWR:  
TIMING: N/A

**V.I.N.**

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# ALTERNATIVE CONVERTER APPROVAL PROCESS

- Once a consumer discovers that a converter is unavailable for their vehicle, they are instructed to contact the State Referee for guidance which may include converter alternatives.
- After the approved and suitable alternative aftermarket converter is installed, the vehicle is then inspected by the State Referee where a BAR Information Label is placed on the driver's door post. The label shows BAR approval and is for the life of the vehicle.
- Importantly, the EO number is approved for use on this vehicle as exactly shown on the label. Additionally, once inventories are replenished, the alternative converter process will not be available for future vehicles.



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## THEFT DETERRENCE

- Consumers can help prevent catalytic converter thefts by parking in well-lit areas, installing motion sensing alarm systems, etching the converter shell with a vehicle identification or license plate number.
- Acceptable theft prevention devices appearing on the market include steel cages, chains, cables, and shields; all of which may make the converters difficult to steal. Permanent devices must only be placed around and not touching the converter shell.
- The theft prevention measures should not be welded to the converter and must retain complete visibility of the part for Smog Check purposes, and that proper ventilation is maintained to prevent a safety concern.

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## SMOG CHECK VISUAL INSPECTION (1 of 4)

Example of converter welding that is not acceptable



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## SMOG CHECK VISUAL INSPECTION (2 of 4)

Example of a cage that allows visibility and does not interfere with the converter



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## SMOG CHECK VISUAL INSPECTION (3 of 4)

Example of a shield that may require removal prior to a Smog Check



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## SMOG CHECK VISUAL INSPECTION (4 of 4)

Example of a converter that has been etched with a vehicle license plate. The performance of the converter has not been compromised and is not a Smog Check failure.



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# QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Submit questions and/or comments to:

Terry O'Neill

Email: [Terry.O'Neill@dca.ca.gov](mailto:Terry.O'Neill@dca.ca.gov)

Phone: 916-403-0150

or

Tim Wilson

Email: [Tim.Wilson@dca.ca.gov](mailto:Tim.Wilson@dca.ca.gov)

Phone: 916-403-0166

Bureau of Automotive Repair

10949 N. Mather Boulevard

Rancho Cordova, CA 95670