



NEWS RELEASE

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Los Angeles County Smog Check Technician Sentenced for Illegally Certifying Cars

Charged with 25 counts of “clean piping”

LOS ANGELES – A former Los Angeles County Smog Check Technician was sentenced today to one year in Los Angeles County jail (credit for time served) and 5 years’ probation after pleading guilty to issuing illegal Smog Check Certificates of Compliance following an investigation by the Department of Consumer Affairs/Bureau of Automotive Repair (DCA/BAR) in conjunction with the Los Angeles County District Attorney’s office.

Williams was also ordered to stay away from the following businesses: Vehicle Emissions, Smog Check, Vehicle Registration Renewal businesses, Auto Auctions, and Vehicle Dismantlers.

Jermaine E. Williams was found guilty of submitting false information to BAR’s emissions information system, and to filing a false vehicle registration document, both of which are felonies.

BAR revoked William’s Smog Check Technician license in August 2010, after a BAR investigation found he had conspired with co-defendant Rodney Johnson, a previously revoked qualified technician, in a scheme to “clean pipe” and conduct improper inspections on numerous vehicles at Smog Experts, 2626 W. 54th St., Los Angeles.

A second investigation by BAR in April of 2010 found that Williams conspired with co-defendant Darnell Usher, an unlicensed technician, in a scheme to “clean pipe” and conduct improper inspections on numerous vehicles at AM PM Smog, 6401 ½ S. Avalon, Los Angeles. BAR also submitted the findings of its investigations to the Los Angeles County District Attorney’s office, which used the findings to undertake a criminal prosecution that led to today’s sentencing.

“Clean piping” is a method to fraudulently inspect and certify vehicles that would not pass a Smog Check on their own. In most instances, a technician or other individual uses a clean exhaust sample from another vehicle that will pass a Smog Check while entering data for the vehicle for which the Smog Check is required.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY SMOG CHECK TECHNICIAN SENTENCED FOR ILLEGALLY CERTIFYING CARS

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“Auto pollution is a threat to public health,” said DCA Acting Director Brian Stiger. “Our Department will continue to ferret out smog check technicians who defraud and endanger the public by keeping polluting cars on the road.”

Co-defendants Johnson and Usher were sentenced separately. Johnson pled no contest on March 24, 2011, to five felony counts each of uttering a false certificate and fraudulent computer access, plus one felony count of forgery. Johnson immediately was sentenced to 16 months in state prison.

Usher was sentenced on April 8, 2011 to five years of formal probation and was given credit for 160 days of custody spent on “house arrest” by way of electronic monitoring.

“The vast majority of Smog Check technicians are honest, hardworking employees,” said BAR Chief Sherry Mehl. “When we find shops or technicians who defraud and endanger the public we will act quickly to put them out of business.”

BAR took administrative action against Smog Experts and its owner Glenda G. Munoz, revoking the Auto Repair Dealer (ARD) Registration in December 2009. BAR also took action against AM PM Smog and its owner Devoney Dashay Nolberto, revoking the ARD Registration in November 2010.

The Department of Consumer Affairs promotes and protects the interests of California Consumers. Consumers who wish to file a complaint against an auto repair facility can contact the Department of Consumer Affairs/Bureau of Automotive Repair at (800) 952-5210. Consumers can also file a complaint online at www.autorepair.ca.gov.

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