

Growing problem of catalytic converter thefts

Across Canada, thieves are helping themselves to catalytic converters on trucks, SUVs, minivans - sawing them off almost any vehicle except for electric vehicles, which don't have them.

Catalytic converters are part of the exhaust system and reduce harmful emissions. They also contain precious metals that are valuable to scrap metal dealers and recyclers and can earn thieves anywhere from a few hundred dollars to almost a thousand dollars.

"The pandemic has led to an increase in this type of theft," said Detective Sean Sutton, who works in major crime with the Toronto Police Service. "A lot of people have lost their jobs and they're looking for a way to make extra income. Addiction obviously plays a role in property crimes, but it's expanded now."

Trucks, minivans and SUVs are prime targets because they're higher off the ground, said Sutton. "It's a lot easier to get underneath an elevated truck to cut it off, usually with a reciprocal saw or something like that."

Toronto Police have received reports of more than 400 catalytic converter thefts between August of last year and August of 2021.

"It tends to be businesses that have been closed as a result of the pandemic," says Sutton. "Like rental car companies and construction companies that tend to have a fleet of vehicles that have been stationary for a long period of time."

Vancouver Police are also battling this property crime - they've received 425 reports of catalytic converter thefts this year, more than double the 204 thefts reported last year.

In an incident earlier this month (see [here](#) for details), a Vancouver woman was pepper-sprayed when she confronted two men who were stealing the catalytic converter on her vehicle.

"There have been 14 catalytic converter thefts this year in Metro Vancouver where the victim was assaulted during the theft," said Const. Tania Visintin. "Most of these incidents involve bear or pepper spray, but in one case, a pellet gun was used."

Calgary Police told Go Public they've received 1280 reports of catalytic converter thefts from the beginning of August 2020 to the end of August of this year.

The Edmonton Police Service has received 1701 reports of catalytic converter thefts in the first 8 months of this year - already surpassing the 1626 thefts reported in 2020.

"It's a crime of opportunity," said Edmonton Police Service Detective Daniel Leach, "and one that isn't easy for citizens to protect themselves against."

The cost of replacing catalytic converters is costing Edmontonians and their insurance companies millions of dollars a year, said Leach.

Police recommend the public call 911 if they witness a theft in progress and warn people not to approach a suspect.

Steps to protect yourself against catalytic converter theft

- Park your vehicle in a well-lit area
- Avoid parking your vehicle in a place where thieves can discreetly crawl underneath and remove the converter (an experienced thief needs only 5-10 minutes to cut off and steal a converter)
- If you have a garage or locked compound, park your vehicle there overnight
- Install anti-theft devices such as a converter lock or motion-sensitive dash cam
- Consider engraving your VIN # (Vehicle Identification Number) on the converter so it's easier to identify as stolen property

Source: Vancouver and Edmonton Police