

Preventing catalytic converter thefts



Catalytic converter thefts have increased 425% in the last year. Review these tips for protecting your fleet from converter thefts, which can cost \$800 to \$2,200 to replace.

Theft of catalytic converters is not a new phenomenon, but the number of thefts has increased substantially within the last year. According to the National Insurance Crime Bureau, reported converter thefts jumped from 282 per month in 2019 to 1,200 per month in 2020, a 425% increase!¹

The reason for the increase? The price of precious metals used in the converters has skyrocketed. Palladium, for example, went from \$500 an ounce in 2016 to over \$2,500 in 2020.² As a comparison, gold is currently around \$1,700 an ounce.³

Thieves can remove a catalytic converter in a matter of minutes, typically sliding under a car with a battery powered Sawzall. Two quick cuts and their efforts are rewarded with several hundred dollars on the black market. Newer vehicles and hybrid vehicles are commonly targeted as the converter's precious metals are in better condition from less use and garner higher prices.

Thieves often target larger fleets where they can remove multiple converters at once, and from larger vehicles which are easier to get under. A Nationwide insured in the Northeast with large passenger vans recently had seven converters stolen in one night, and replacement cost per vehicle was significant. A Colorado insured also had them removed from ten trucks over a two- to three-week period.

Tips for preventing catalytic converter thefts

Catalytic converters are on all vehicles, so thieves have a lot of options as to which they are going to target. Make your organization a less desirable target by incorporating as many security measures as practical.

- Educate your staff about the problem and ask them to report any suspicious activity — “If you see something say something”.
- Park vehicles in secured locations, preferably in a garage or fenced and gated yard.
- Evaluate exterior lighting. Is lighting coverage adequate and are all lights functioning?
- Add exterior alarms and surveillance cameras.
- Engrave the vehicle's VIN and your phone number into the converter. Scrap yards are less likely to purchase a converter with these identifications and may call to check.
- Install vehicle alarms which are activated by vibration.
- Consider security products specifically designed to prevent catalytic converter theft. These fall into two areas:
 - Guards, shields, clamps and cables that inhibit removal of the converter. Check with your dealer or car manufacturer to ensure these devices will not alter vehicle operation or warranties.
 - Sensor-activated alarms that sound under the car, making it unbearable for the thief to stay under the vehicle.
- Ask local law enforcement to patrol your property often during the night. Let them know it is okay for their officers to park at your facility during evening and weekend shifts.

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For your risk management and safety needs, contact Nationwide Loss Control Services: 1-866-808-2101 or LCS@nationwide.com.

¹<https://www.nicb.org/news/news-releases/catalytic-converter-theft-skyrocketing-nationwide>

²Nasdaq, Palladium, 3/18/2021. <https://www.nasdaq.com/market-activity/commodities/pa%3Anmx>

³Nasdaq - Gold, 3/18/21, <https://www.nasdaq.com/market-activity/commodities/gc%3Acmx>