



RCMP BURNABY DETACHMENT

INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: CHAIR PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

DATE: 2021-11-01

FROM: OIC BURNABY DETACHMENT

FILE:2410-20

SUBJECT: THEFT OF CATALYTIC CONVERTERS

At the Public Safety Committee meeting on September 29, 2021, Mr. Heymann Yip, one of the committee members, advised the committee that he intended to present a motion to the committee in support of a local bylaw to address the issue of catalytic converter theft in Burnaby.

In response, I would like to offer the Committee members some information from the policing perspective on how extensive the problem is in Burnaby, how Burnaby is compared to some of the other jurisdictions in the Lower Mainland, and some of challenges police encounter in investigating this offence.

- Police records show catalytic converter theft is a multi-jurisdictional issue in the Lower Mainland. The below chart displays the number of thefts in Burnaby and provides a comparison with some of the neighboring jurisdictions. The actual numbers might be higher as some victims tend not to report the matter to the police.

| Jurisdiction | Burnaby | Coquitlam | Surrey | Vancouver | Richmond | New Westminster | Maple Ridge |
|--------------------------------------|---------|-----------|--------|-----------|----------|-----------------|-------------|
| # catalytic converter thefts 2021YTD | 310 | 276 | 699 | 443 | 216 | 104 | 204 |

Data is preliminary and subject to change pending further data quality review. File scoring may vary across jurisdictions.

- Burnaby RCMP takes theft of catalytic converters seriously and responds to these calls accordingly. The detachment Prolific Offender Suppression Team (POST) has been focused on this issue for quite some time and it has been successful in identifying several suspects so far. In its investigations, POST has been communicating and collaborating with other RCMP detachments and police departments as some offenders operate in multi jurisdictions.
- Currently, further operational planning is being conducted in conjunction with neighbouring detachments and police departments in order to increase the level of

resources dedicated to investigation of catalytic converter theft, hoping to tackle this issue by identifying and prosecuting the offenders.

- Research shows, with the global shortage of semi-conductors and the scarce precious metals (platinum, palladium and rhodium) used in catalytic converters, especially during Covid-19 Pandemic, the price of these metals have gone up dramatically. As a result, theft of catalytic converter has become a common crime in many countries around the world, putting a tremendous amount of pressure on police resources.
- It is believed that a large number of property crime offenders are involved in catalytic converter theft in the Lower Mainland due to its high profit. Some of the offenders are more specialized in committing this offence, passing through jurisdictions to commit their crime, and have connections to certain scrap metal shops that purchase the stolen items from them.
- The police are under investigative constraints in their investigations:
 - Possessing or purchasing a catalytic converter is not illegal. There are no unique identifiers on a catalytic converter.
 - The offender must be found committing the offence (Theft under \$5000)
 - Offences are random and usually occur in early morning hours. It makes it more difficult for police resources to maintain tracking the offender.
 - The tools required to cut off catalytic converters from exhaust system are readily available on the market and it takes less than a couple of minutes for offenders to do the job and get away.

Despite the challenges, Burnaby RCMP, as in the past, will push ahead to work with other police forces to reduce the number of catalytic converter thefts in Burnaby. However, enactment of any provincial legislations to regulate sale and purchase of catalytic converters will allow the police to do their jobs more effectively. The current BC Metal Dealers and Recyclers Act doesn't mention catalytic converter, or any precious metals used in it, on the list of metals covered under this Act. In comparison, the Province of Alberta proclaimed the Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act in November 2019 with the intent to protect against metal theft, specifying catalytic converter as one of the metallic items on the list. Under this Act, all transactions must be recorded in detail by the business owner and be provided to police upon request.



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