



Staff Report

File #: 23-0184

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

DATE: 03/01/2023

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Police Department

SUBJECT:

An ordinance adding Chapter 10.47 to the Corona Municipal Code Regarding Unlawful Possession of Catalytic Converters.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This staff report requests the City Council to approve an ordinance adding Chapter 10.47 to the Corona Municipal Code Regarding Unlawful Possession of Catalytic Converters. The City has seen a significant increase in the thefts of catalytic converters and is seeking the adoption of an ordinance added to the municipal code to make the unlawful possession of a catalytic converter a crime, even when the original victim cannot be identified.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the City Council Introduce, by title only, and waive full reading for consideration of Ordinance No. 3364, the first reading of an ordinance regarding the unlawful possession of a catalytic converter.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

A catalytic converter is an exhaust emissions control device located underneath automobiles between the exhaust manifold and the muffler. These devices contain precious metals such as platinum, palladium, and rhodium, some of which are valued at several thousand dollars per ounce. The catalytic converter is easily accessible on most vehicles.

Catalytic converters have become a primary target for thieves due to their accessibility and precious metals. Removal of the converter can take less than one-minute using common tools such as a reciprocating saw, and the metals inside can yield up to \$200 on the black market. Once the catalytic converter is removed, the vehicle can be inoperable, and it can cost the victim more than \$2,000 to replace.

To date, no City, State, or Federal legislation is applicable to the City of Corona to define and punish catalytic converter thefts absent an identifiable victim. As a result, catalytic converter thefts continue

to rise in the City of Corona and throughout the State of California. State legislators have recently passed bills addressing the purchase of catalytic converters; however, there is still no legislation to address the unlawful possession of a catalytic converter without an identified victim. Due to the manner in which these types of thefts occur and the lack of identifying markers on catalytic converters or their precious metals, linking the stolen catalytic converter to a victim is nearly impossible unless the suspect is caught in the act.

ANALYSIS:

Since 2020, the City has experienced a significant increase in the theft of catalytic converters. In 2020, a total of 192 catalytic converter thefts were reported. That number rose to 702 in 2021 and 941 in 2022-a 390% increase in two years. The Police Department has implemented public education efforts to address these thefts, but due to the lack of legislation defining and prosecuting illegal possession of catalytic converters, many catalytic converter thefts in the City of Corona have gone unsolved.

The proposed ordinance provides the City with a means to protect the public and deter this type of criminal activity. By establishing sanctions for the unlawful possession of a catalytic converter, even without an identifiable victim, the City will enable the Police Department to prevent criminals from profiting from the sale and recycling of stolen catalytic converters. This will also provide indirect justice to the victims whose cases go unsolved and help reduce Part I crime statistics, which have been negatively impacted by catalytic converter thefts. In addition, this will help decrease the fiscal and personnel impact on the City of Corona related to investigating catalytic converter thefts.

Other cities across Southern California have adopted, or are in the process of adopting, similar ordinances to protect their communities. While these ordinances are too new to provide relevant data to measure their success, adopting an ordinance in the City of Corona will deter the criminals forced out of those municipalities and looking for new communities to victimize.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to the City as a result of this Ordinance.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

This action is exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which states that a project is exempt from CEQA if the activity is covered by the commonsense exemption that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. This action is merely adding Chapter 10.47 to the Corona Municipal Code regarding unlawful possession of a catalytic converter, and there is no possibility that adopting this action will have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, no environmental analysis is required.

PREPARED BY: DAN BLOOMFIELD, CAPTAIN

REVIEWED BY: ROBERT NEWMAN, CHIEF OF POLICE

Attachments:

1. Exhibit 1- Ordinance No. 3364 Unlawful Possession of Catalytic Converters