

Beware! Thieves Zero-In on New Targets

Thefts of catalytic converters are now reaching epidemic levels across the country. Thieves target converters because they contain three metals—platinum, rhodium, and palladium—which can be sold at local scrap yards. Trucks and SUVs, particularly Toyotas, are easy marks because of their high ground clearance, but vans and buses are targets also due to their size.

Thefts take only seconds to occur, so it is important to take precautions. The following recommendations provide options for reducing your vulnerability to these crimes.

- Whenever possible, park your vehicle in a secured garage.
- If a garage is not available, park your vehicle(s) in a highly visible, well-lit area.
- Consult your local law enforcement agency about programs that deter theft by etching your driver's license number on the catalytic converter. (Scrap yards are required by law to obtain the driver's license number from anyone trying to sell small auto parts.)
- Weld the bolts of your catalytic converter to increase the effort required to remove it. Muffler shops and garages perform this procedure for approximately \$50.
- Advertise that your catalytic converters are etched or welded by posting visible signage.
- Add security sensors to your catalytic converter that trigger your vehicle's alarm.
- Install a cage around the catalytic converter to hinder accessibility.

A thief with a plan and power equipment can remove a catalytic converter in less than 60 seconds. If you see something suspicious, document and report it to the police immediately.

Other new theft targets at camps are copper pipes and wiring. Not only is the cost of replacing materials expensive, repairing the damage can cost thousands of dollars. Most thefts occur when camps are unoccupied, so consider implementing these ideas to protect your property:

- A year-round caretaker is your best source of prevention.
- Carefully secure gates when camp is closed. A chain and padlock are not going to slow down a thief who brought a hacksaw to take out your pipes. Instead, install a deadbolt or similar locking mechanism, and restrict key access.
- The same security measures should be taken for crawl space doors. Deadbolts are good deterrents, if they are installed and used properly.
- When buildings are reopened, check that your pipes and electrical wiring are intact before restoring power and water. Significant fire or water damage can occur, if wiring or pipes are missing. If your copper pipes are damaged or stolen, consider replacing them with PVC pipes to deter theft in the future.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.