



COUNTY OF KINGS BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

GOVERNMENT CENTER HANFORD, CALIFORNIA 93230 (559) 852-2362
Catherine Venturella, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

AGENDA ITEM February 3, 2026

SUBMITTED BY: Administration – Kyria Martinez/Alex C. Walker

SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFT ORDINANCE

SUMMARY:

Overview:

A catalytic converter is an exhaust emission control device for vehicles that converts toxic gases and pollutants in exhaust gas from an internal combustion engine into less-toxic pollutants. The device contains precious metals, such as rhodium, platinum, and palladium, making it an attractive target for thieves. California recently enacted several laws aimed at reducing catalytic converter thefts and its profit incentive, such as Assembly Bill (AB) 1740 and Senate Bill (SB) 1087 in 2022, and AB 641 in 2023. Overall, catalytic converter thefts across the state and in the County have decreased in recent years. Despite the decrease, thefts continue to impact victims, burdening them with cost to repair damages to their vehicles as well as replacing stolen catalytic converters. Other California counties, including Fresno, Kern, Ventura, Riverside, and San Bernardino, have adopted similar ordinances. Before the Board is an overview of catalytic converter thefts in the County, its incorporated cities, a review of existing state law, and a draft ordinance modeled from the aforementioned counties.

Recommendation:

Adopt an ordinance adding Article VII to Chapter 23 of the Kings County Code of Ordinances pertaining to the unlawful possession of a detached catalytic converter.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no significant anticipated increase in net county costs associated with the recommended action. Patrol and enforcement efforts by the Kings County Sheriff's Office are not expected to increase. There may be indirect impacts to the County's jail expenses, as a result of the ordinance's enforcement.

(Cont'd)

BACKGROUND:

BOARD ACTION:

APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED: OTHER:

ROLL CALL: NEVES, THAYER, VALLE, VERBOON, ROBINSON – AYE

[Reference: See Ordinance No. 720, which by reference hereto is made part of these minutes.]

I hereby certify that the above order was passed
and adopted on February 3, 2026.

CATHERINE VENTURELLA, Clerk to the Board

By Catherine Venturella, Deputy.

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Over the past five years, there have been 55 catalytic converter thefts in the unincorporated areas of Kings County. To put it in perspective, all four of the County's incorporated cities were contacted, and the following are the reported catalytic converter theft totals over the past five years:

- Avenal: 9 thefts
- Corcoran: 55 thefts
- Hanford: 184 thefts
- Lemoore: 99 thefts

In both the County and its four incorporated cities, catalytic converter thefts are down. The County had only one theft in both 2024 and 2025. The vast majority of catalytic converter thefts in the County over a five-year period occurred in 2021 (20) and 2022 (24), with 2023 having only nine, representing a significant decrease over time. At the time of the inquiry, the City of Corcoran and the City of Avenal both reported zero thefts in both 2024 and 2025. The City of Lemoore had three reported thefts in 2024, and one reported theft in 2025. The City of Hanford had eight in 2024, and five in 2025. Regardless of the scale of the issue, catalytic converter thefts have a negative impact on victims, including the cost of damages to the vehicle, the cost to repair the damages, and the cost to replace the catalytic converter. The total reported value of the thefts in Kings County specifically is \$93,766.

The draft ordinance before the Board amends the Kings County Code of Ordinances by adding Article VII to Chapter 23. The draft ordinance outlines that it is unlawful for any person who is not a licensed recycler, or other authorized entity under California Vehicle Code 10852.5 to possess a catalytic converter that is not attached to a vehicle unless the person has a valid proof of ownership of the catalytic converter, as defined in the ordinance. A violation of the draft ordinance is considered a misdemeanor, punishable by confinement of up to six months in jail and/or fines up to \$1,000 per violation. Each violation constitutes a separate violation, including, but not limited to, each individual possession of multiple catalytic converters during a single contact by law enforcement. If the Board were to adopt an ordinance, it would only be enforceable in the areas of the county under the County's jurisdiction, such as the county's unincorporated area, including the communities of Armona, Home Garden, and Kettleman City.

It is important to note for the Board's consideration that the draft catalytic converter ordinance could potentially be deemed preempted by California state law, if challenged. The reason why is because Catalytic converters are regulated under a number of sections of California law, including California Vehicle Code, California Health and Safety Code, and the California Business and Professions Code. It is notable that several counties have adopted ordinances regarding the theft of catalytic converters recently. Those counties include Fresno, Kern, Ventura, Riverside, and San Bernardino. These recently adopted catalytic converter ordinances have not been challenged, nor have they been determined to be preempted in court. The proposed ordinance follows a similar model of the counties referenced above.

The following are other codes that regulate catalytic converters:

1. California Vehicle Code Section 1795.5: requires a "buy-here-pay-here dealer" to include a catalytic converter in a 30-day warranty, along with other systems, such as braking, engine cooling, and transmission.
2. California Health and Safety Code Section 44012: requires catalytic converters to be included in a smog check.

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3. California Health and Safety Code Section 43008.6: imposes a civil fine on a person who disables systems of gasoline-powered vehicles, including catalytic converters.
4. California Vehicle Code Section 221: lists all the exceptions to entities that are not required to be licensed as “automobile dismantlers,” including agricultural, farming, mining, or ranching businesses.

Any violation of this draft ordinance is considered a misdemeanor, punishable by confinement of up to six months in jail and/or fines up to \$1,000 per violation. For comparison purposes, the following are the penalties in other catalytic converter ordinances. Ventura, Riverside, Kern, and Fresno all consider a violation of their respective ordinances as misdemeanor, punishable by one year in jail and/or \$1,000 fine. San Bernardino considers a violation as punishable by six months in jail and/or \$1,000 fine, akin to the County’s proposed draft.

Some counties, such as Fresno, Riverside, and Kern provide administrative penalties as an enforcement tool. Ventura and San Bernardino counties do not have an administrative penalty mechanism in their respective ordinances. The draft ordinance before the Board does not include an administrative penalty, due to capacity and expenses associated with collecting minimal fees and the current trend of thefts in the County.

The draft ordinance was first introduced to the Board on January 27, 2026. If adopted by the Board at the February 3, 2026 meeting, it would take effect thirty (30) days later, becoming enforceable on March 5, 2026. The Kings County Sheriff’s Office, as well as the incorporated cities’ respective police departments, coordinated in the data collection that informed the draft ordinance’s development.

The ordinance has been reviewed by County Counsel and approved as to form.