

# SAFETY NOTICE

## SKYROCKETING CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFTS

Over the last few years, catalytic converter thefts have increased significantly, including in New Jersey with an increase of over 700% last year alone. State Farm Insurance Company reported a 300% increase in theft claims last year and the City of Philadelphia has already had over 700 reported thefts in the first 6 weeks of 2022. Catalytic converters contain various precious metals such as platinum, palladium and rhodium. They can be worth several hundred dollars as scrap, and because they are quickly and easily removed with a battery-powered saw, they are easy targets for thefts.

A fleet of school buses offers an enticing target for bad actors that can easily remove several of these catalytic converters in minutes and disappear. Many school districts across the country and locally have been the target of these crimes including a Burlington County district that had 12 buses damaged and a North Jersey district that had 8 stolen. Just recently, a GCSSDJIF member district had a converter stolen from a district pickup truck.

Because these thefts are “easy money”, they will continue to increase. For a school district, this can mean thousands of dollars in damage, disruption of transportation services and expenses for rental vehicles. And since these thefts are so rampant, coupled with the dreaded “supply chain” disruptions, there could be delays in getting the parts for repairs. To reduce the risk of theft, there are several precautionary measures you can take to make your vehicles less desirable to thieves.

- Park vehicles in a well-lit area.
- Install security fencing around fleet parking.
- Install or upgrade security camera systems around vehicles.
- If you have district security personnel, have them increase patrols around vehicle parking areas. If not, request local police to increase patrols if possible.
- Etch the last 8 digits of the VIN or the license plate number on the catalytic converter as a deterrent and a warning to scrap yards that it may be stolen.
- Consider installing commercial theft deterrents such as metal shields, clamps and reinforced straps that make it more difficult to access and cut off. These shields run several hundred dollars each but can significantly reduce your risks.
- Consider installing special catalytic converter alarms that will sound when someone tampers with the unit.



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Taking preventative measures now can save  
you time, money and disruption later.

