



COUNTY OF YOLO
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Sacramento Men Convicted of Stealing Catalytic Converters from Eight Counties

(Woodland, CA) – December 1, 2021- Dao Xiong, 44, and Shaneel Lal, 38, of Sacramento were convicted of conspiracy to commit a felony and grand theft for stealing catalytic converters in Yolo, Sacramento, Placer, El Dorado, Napa, Butte, Alameda, and Contra Costa Counties.

A catalytic converter is part of a vehicle's exhaust system. They often contain precious metals such as platinum, gold, rhodium, and palladium that have high value in the metal recycling market and make them an item of choice among thieves and crime rings. Replacement costs for catalytic converters range from \$1,000 to \$3,000 and often it can take weeks or months for an automotive repair shop to get the right catalytic converter.

The investigation began in September 2020 after a Davis resident reported to police that his catalytic converter had been stolen from his Toyota Prius. Detectives with the Davis Police Department's Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving (COPPS) Unit launched an investigation and were able to obtain a surveillance video from a nearby car that helped identify the suspect's vehicle. Through surveillance and the assistance of the Folsom Police Department, detectives were able to identify Xiong and Lal. Detectives monitored their activities as they traveled to multiple counties, with Xiong as the driver and Lal as the passenger. They appeared to be "scouting" neighborhoods. "Scouting" is searching or casing an area to engage in criminal activity. Electronic surveillance revealed that Xiong and Lal scouted neighborhoods during the daytime or early evening hours and then returned to the same locations later in the night or early morning hours. Official theft reports were made to local law enforcement agencies and the surveillance data matched the location and timeframe for catalytic converter thefts.

On October 23, 2020, Xiong and Lal were stopped by Davis Police officers and found with catalytic converters in their possession. Based on surveillance data and theft reports, these catalytic converters were believed to have been stolen out of Napa County. Charges were filed against Xiong and Lal; however, due to the judicial “zero bail” policy at the time, Xiong and Lal were released from custody. While out of custody, they continued to steal catalytic converters until they were arrested again by Davis Police detectives on February 2, 2021, at the Thunder Valley Casino in Placer County. Between September 17, 2020, and February 2, 2021, Xiong and Lal were believed to have stolen 64 catalytic converters from eight counties. The total loss amount is still being determined; however, it is expected to be approximately \$100,000.

District Attorney Jeff Reisig stated, “Catalytic converter theft is not victimless and is not just another ‘property crime.’ It impacts the livelihood and financial stability of many individuals. People are unable to drive their cars, get to work, or pick up their kids because of these thieves. These crimes will not be tolerated and this plea sends a message that law enforcement takes these thefts seriously.”

Yolo County Deputy District Attorney Matt DeMoura, who prosecuted this case for Yolo and seven other counties stated, “this prosecution would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts of the Davis Police Department’s Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving (COPPS) Unit and the Folsom Police Department.”

Xiong and Lal will be sentenced on January 10, 2022, in front of the Honorable Timothy Fall, who presided over the plea. Each is expected to receive 6 years in jail pursuant to a plea agreement.

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