



Minnesota
Pollution
Control
Agency

Metro District,
Operations &
Planning

Catalytic Converters

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Emissions come from several different places on your vehicle. Small percentages come from the engine crankcase fumes and gasoline vapors from the fuel tank and carburetor. These fumes and vapors are controlled by a system of hoses and tubes that recycle the fumes and vapors back to the engine so that they can be burned.

The largest percentage of your car's emissions comes from the exhaust pipe and may be controlled through the use of a catalytic converter.

The function of a catalytic converter is to burn fuel vapors that were not completely consumed in the engine. As such, it may be considered one of the most important pollution control devices on your vehicle.

Where is the catalytic converter located?

If you look underneath your vehicle, you should be able to see two "swellings" in the long series of pipes that make up the exhaust system. The device located closest to the engine is the catalytic converter. The second device is the muffler. If you only see one device and your engine is not running loudly, it could be that your catalytic converter has been removed.

Under the federal Clean Air Act, no one is allowed to tamper with a vehicle's emission controls. If you have discovered that your car is missing its catalytic converter, you should have another one installed immediately.

The missing converter should be replaced with an original equipment manufacturer's (OEM) converter or an approved, aftermarket converter. An aftermarket converter is not made by the vehicle's manufacturer but conforms to the OEM specifications. An "approved" converter has received approval from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Installation of catalytic converters

You can install either an OEM or aftermarket converter if:

- The catalytic converter is already missing;
- A vehicle inspection program has determined that the catalytic converter and/or the fuel inlet restrictor has been damaged; or
- The vehicle has more than 50,000 miles or is more than five years old.

An aftermarket catalytic converter may not be installed if the OEM catalytic converter is present and functioning properly.

You must install an OEM catalytic converter, regardless of mileage, if:

- There is a replacement under recall or warranty (less than five years or 50,000 miles) or
- The vehicle is returning from overseas use.



Requirements for converter installation

All aftermarket catalytic converters should be installed only in those vehicles as specified by the converter manufacturer. The equipment must be installed in the same location as the original converter and be properly connected to existing air injection components.

Individuals installing a catalytic converter should keep complete records of the replacement process, all equipment warranties, statements and invoices.

Copies of the repair invoice should include:

- The car owner's name and address;
- The vehicle model year, make and mileage; and
- A signed statement explaining the reason for the catalytic converter replacement.

You should keep the replaced catalytic converter for at least 15 days in case inspection of the replaced converter is needed. The replaced equipment should also be marked so that it can be matched to the repair record, invoice and statement, if necessary.

Removal of catalytic converters

The federal Clean Air Act [203 (a) (3) (A) and (B)] does not allow anyone to replace a catalytic converter with "replacement pipes". Improper removal or installation of a catalytic converter by any individual could result in stiff fines and/or imprisonment.

The only time when removal of a catalytic converter is allowed is when the vehicle is being shipped to a country that does not sell unleaded gasoline. The vehicle owner must have a letter from the EPA authorizing the catalytic converter's removal. Vehicles sent to Canada or Mexico are not eligible for this exemption.

Where Can I Call to Find Out More?

MPCA: St. Paul	(651) 296-6300 toll-free/TDD (800) 657-3864
Brainerd	(218) 828-2492
Detroit Lakes	(218) 847-1519
Duluth	(218) 723-4660
Marshall	(507) 537-7146
Rochester	(507) 285-7343