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California's New Aftermarket Catalytic Converters Regulations

Starting January 1, 2009, California's aftermarket catalytic converter program takes on a new look. No longer will the conventional pre-OBD II parts be offered for sale and both CA OBD II as well as pre-OBD II parts will be quite different.

The new regulations will not have a major visual impact to the consumer for OBD II compliant products; most of the impact is procedural in nature in obtaining "certification" or exemption status (Executive Orders) as well as higher standards for Quality Assurance monitoring and reporting. The most noticeable difference will be in the way our converters will be stamped. The new stamp will include the Executive Order # and the stamp must be legible from 5 ft for enforcement purposes. The current practice of stamping CA/CE (series #) will no longer be required. For pre-OBD II, the product line will be completely revamped. The new regulations require pre-OBD II catalytic converters meet OBD II Low Emission Vehicle (LEV) standards, a significant improvement in performance over the current generation parts. The parts will no longer be sold under an engine displacement/test weight umbrella but rather grouped by vehicle category. There are 4 categories of pre-OBD II applications defined as:

- PC1- Passenger cars with a single converter or only one converter per side in a system.
- PC2- Passenger cars where there are two or more converters in-line
- T1- Same as PC1 from a configuration perspective but for trucks. There are no displacement or weight limitations.
- T2- Same as PC2 but for trucks. There are no weight or displacement limitations

The major difference expected for some pre-OBD II applications short term will be in the available converter configurations. Some manufacturers may for instance elect to "certify" only a small oval and a round but not a large oval for PC1. The stamp requirement for pre-OBD II converters will also be the same as for OBD II compliant product with the Executive Order and part number to be visible from a distance of 5 ft. Since these parts are unique from anything currently available, all new part number schemes are required for each category, which may impact inventory levels.

FAQ's

Q: Under the new regulations will my old pre-OBD II converter pass smog?

A: Yes, as long as it was installed before 1/1/09 and the vehicle meets the applicable emissions standards.

Q: Can a PC1 converter be installed on a PC2 application?

A: The ARB requires that only a converter exempted for a specific application be installed on that particular application. Since the Executive Order # will be stamped on the part, it will be easy to determine and enforce the correct part is on the vehicle.

Q: Can existing inventory of the old pre-OBD II and OBD II parts be sold after 1/1/2009?

A: Existing pre-OBD II parts will become illegal to sell and install after 12/31/2008, existing CARB compliant OBD II parts will be grandfathered and can be legally installed until new inventory becomes available.

Q: I assume with a higher performance converter comes a higher price, what is the benefit of this additional cost?

A: CARB studies have shown that by 2012, they expect to realize a decrease in emission levels of HC by 10,600lbs per day* and NOx by 62,600lbs per day*. In addition, a potential reduction of CO by 102,600lbs per day is expected to be realized.

*Source: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/regact/2007/amcat07/isor.pdf>

Q: If a California registered vehicle is brought to a shop outside the state of California for converter repair, can a non-California part legally be installed on the vehicle?

A: Yes, provided all federal installation requirements are met, however, the vehicle would fail its next smog check in California.

Ensuring you a problem-free exhaust future,

Hans