

# Springfield Member of Catalytic Converter Theft Crew Sentenced to Nearly Five Years in Prison

A Springfield man was sentenced in federal court in Boston to his role in a regional organized theft crew that stole catalytic converters from over 490 vehicles. It is alleged that the crew also stole from ATMs and jewelry stores.

Santo Feliberty, 34, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Leo T. Sorokin to 57 months in prison and three years of supervised release. In October 2024, Feliberty pleaded guilty to conspiracy to transport stolen property in interstate commerce; two counts of interstate transportation of stolen property; conspiracy to commit bank theft; bank theft; and being a felon in possession of a firearm and ammunition.

In April 2023, Feliberty was arrested and charged along with six others in connection with the theft, transportation and sale of stolen catalytic converters taken from at least 496 vehicles across Massachusetts and New Hampshire in 2022 through April 2023 alone. It is believed that a significant number of additional thefts have not been identified or were not ever reported to law enforcement.

According to court filings, there has been a precipitous decline in catalytic converter thefts reported in Massachusetts as a result of the April 2023 takedown – with only seven reported incidents of catalytic converter theft over the past 11 months following the arrests, in comparison to the hundreds of thefts reported during the nine-month period prior.

Catalytic converter theft has become a nationwide problem

across a multitude of state, local, and federal jurisdictions due to the high-valued precious metals they contain – some of which are more valuable than gold, with black-market prices being more than \$1,000 each in recent years. The theft of a vehicle's catalytic converter results in damage that renders the vehicle inoperable – both mechanically and legally under EPA regulations.

The thefts in this case resulted in losses of approximately \$5,000 per vehicle with certain trucks costing over \$10,000 to repair. This amounts to an approximate \$2 million in losses suffered by more than 300 separate victims who were forced to deal with their vehicles being disabled for potentially weeks on end. The more than 300 victims included businesses and individuals across Massachusetts and parts of New Hampshire, including a food pantry, automotive businesses, tradesmen, a bakery, single parents, a home healthcare provider and the elderly. Some businesses were repeatedly targeted on multiple nights.

Once in possession of the stolen catalytic converters, the crew would then sell them to Jose Torres, who would accumulate stolen catalytic converters from multiple theft crews and then in turn sell them to scrap dealers in the Northeast – transacting approximately \$30,000 to \$80,000 in stolen catalytic converters per week. Torres then sold stolen catalytic converters to scrap dealers who have since been charged federally for interstate transportation of stolen property and money laundering in the District of Connecticut, the Eastern District of California and Northern District of Oklahoma.

At sentencing, Feliberty was held accountable for his participation in thefts of catalytic converters from 52 vehicles across eight cities and towns in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. On the first night of the thefts, Feliberty was confronted by the vehicle owner, who took matters into his own hands and smashed out the rear window of the car Feliberty was

driving.

In addition to the catalytic converter thefts, Feliberty also conspired to steal from ATMs of federally insured banks in Massachusetts on three separate occasions in December 2022. This conspiracy involved the use of stolen trucks to rip the ATMs from the ground and gain access to the vault.

Feliberty also committed burglaries of two New Hampshire jewelry stores on Jan. 12, 2023, and the theft of a trailer on Dec. 14, 2022. The combined total value of the jewelry stolen during the burglaries was determined to be over \$137,000, with each store facing approximately \$10,000 in costs to repair the resulting damage.

Additionally, a firearm and ammunition were found at Feliberty's residence. Feliberty is prohibited from possessing firearms and ammunition due to prior felony convictions.

On May 17, 2023, Torres pleaded guilty to his role in the catalytic converter theft conspiracy and is scheduled to be sentenced at a later date.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy; Jodi Cohen, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division; John E. Mawn Jr., Interim Colonel of the Massachusetts State Police; and Kevin Gallagher, Director of Operations for the National Insurance Crime Bureau, Northeast Region made the announcement today. Valuable assistance was also provided by the United States Attorney's Offices for the District of Connecticut, the Northern District of Oklahoma and the Eastern District of California; Homeland Security Investigations; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives; and the New England State Police Information Network (NESPIN). Assistant U.S. Attorney Philip A. Mallard of the Organized Crime & Gang Unit is prosecuting the case.

Over 70 local police departments in Massachusetts, New

Hampshire and Connecticut contributed to this investigation through the submission of their investigations of catalytic converter thefts in their jurisdiction. The Massachusetts police departments contributing to the investigation were Abington, Acton, Andover, Auburn, Bedford, Bellingham, Beverly, Billerica, Burlington, Bridgewater, Canton, Carver, Chelmsford, Concord, Cranston, East Hampton, Easton, Fitchburg, Framingham, Franklin, Gardner, Hampton, Hanover, Haverhill, Hingham, Holliston, Holyoke, Hudson, Ipswich, Lawrence, Leominster, Lynn, Malden, Mansfield, Medford, Marlborough, Methuen, Middleton, Milford, Millbury, Needham, Newton, Northborough, Norwell, Norwood, Peabody, Pembroke, Plymouth, Randolph, Rockland, Sharon, Shrewsbury, Springfield, Sterling, Sturbridge, Sudbury, Tyngsborough, Walpole, Waltham, Watertown, West Bridgewater, Weymouth, Wilmington, Woburn and Worcester. The Bow, Concord, Derry, Hooksett, Hudson, Londonderry, Manchester, Salem and Windham New Hampshire police departments also contributed. The South Windsor and Windsor Connecticut Police Departments also contributed to the investigation.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The remaining defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.