



FROM THE DESK OF DA MERRIWEATHER

The District Attorney's Office is responsible for the prosecution of criminal offenses in Mecklenburg County. Each month, this newsletter provides information about court happenings, initiatives being used to combat crime, the DA's work in the community, and more.



Mecklenburg
County
District
Attorney's
Office

SAFETY TIPS

Catalytic converter thefts on the rise

Since the pandemic began, the District Attorney's Felony Crimes Team and local law enforcement have seen a dramatic increase in the number of catalytic converter thefts. Converter thieves can use a jack to lift a car, saw off the catalytic converter, and be gone in less than 15 minutes. Hybrid vehicles, particularly Toyota Priuses, are often targeted. Catalytic converters are part of vehicles' exhaust systems. They contain valuable, precious metals such as platinum, palladium and rhodium, which can be sold.

If a converter is stolen, drivers might not realize anything is wrong until they start their engine and hear a loud sound and/or notice the vehicle's driving is unusual. Multiple police departments in Mecklenburg County have issued warnings this year. In January, Matthews police announced they had increased patrols after seeing an uptick in overnight thefts of converters from Toyota Priuses and work trucks and vans. In April, Charlotte-Mecklenburg police also reported an alarming increase in converter thefts across the city.

Assistant District Attorney Jeff Davis, supervisor of the Felony Crimes Team, offers these prevention tips:

- Park your car in a garage, driveway or well-lit area. People who park their cars on the street and away from their homes are most vulnerable to converter thefts.
- See something, say something! Call 911 to report suspicious activity, particularly if you hear noise coming from parked vehicles or see someone under a vehicle.
- Consider anti-theft locks designed for catalytic converters.

IN COURT

Although court operations were reduced in August due to an increase in COVID-19 among court employees and the community, the DA's Office continues to work with our court partners to ensure we can keep court proceedings going in a safe manner. Despite restricted operations, our prosecutors were able to bring cases to trial, resulting in the convictions of a man who [fatally stabbed an Uber driver](#) and a [man who raped a 14-year-old girl](#). Working in administrative court, our Special Victims Team convicted 16 defendants, and over the course of a two-week session, our Felony Crimes Team convicted 60 defendants.

EXPLORING

DA Spencer Merriweather is inviting local high school students to join his office's Exploring Post! The DA's Exploring program, which is sponsored by the Boy Scouts, is open to young men and women who want to learn about careers in the criminal justice system. An open house will be held in October for interested students and their parents/guardians. The program will begin virtually this year due to COVID-19 with the possibility of transitioning to in-person meetings as conditions improve. For details, email community@charmckda.com.



FAQ: What is a grand jury, and how does it work?

In North Carolina, a grand jury is a group of 18 jurors that hears evidence in felony cases and determines whether there is probable cause a defendant committed a crime. If they find probable cause, they return a true bill of indictment. Grand jurors don't decide someone's guilt or innocence. That is up to trial jurors. The DA's Office prepares bills of indictment to send to the grand jury for their review, but prosecutors are not present for the proceedings. Learn more about grand juries in the [N.C. Judicial Branch's Grand Juror Handbook](#).

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