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Bureau of Automotive Repair Cracks Down on Unlicensed Auto Repair Shops in Fresno

Sweep Underscores State efforts to halt unregistered operators

FRESNO – As part of its effort to put the brakes on unlicensed activity in California, investigators with the Department of Consumer Affairs' Bureau of Automotive Repair (DCA/BAR) and DCA's Division of Investigation conducted a sweep of 17 auto repair facilities in Fresno on Tuesday and Wednesday looking for shops that were unlicensed or had delinquent licenses. They found 12 shops that were not in compliance with California law.

California law requires auto repair shops to be registered with DCA/BAR. Licensure helps protect California consumers by ensuring a fair and competitive automotive repair marketplace. It also gives consumers a means to seek redress if they have problems with a licensee.

"Unlicensed activity hurts all Californians," said Acting DCA Director Brian Stiger. "It is a part of a multi-billion dollar a year underground economy which robs our communities of resources, threatens the safety of consumers and puts reputable, licensed trade and health care providers at an economic disadvantage. Consumers who deal with licensed professionals get the protection they deserve."

"Consumers may think they're saving money when they go to an unlicensed auto repair shop, but most times they aren't," said BAR Chief Sherry Mehl. "Consumers should make sure they deal only with licensed shops. That way, if they have a problem, BAR can step in and help them."

In all, 13 individuals were taken into custody, cited for operating without a license, and then released. They will appear in court and could face fines of up to \$1,000 and up to six months in jail.

BAR encourages consumers to remember the following tips before taking a vehicle to an automotive repair shop:

- Verify the Automotive Repair Dealer's license is valid by checking online at www.bar.ca.gov or call 1-800-952-5210.
- Ask for a written estimate for any repairs **before** work begins.
- Ask for the return of any parts replaced during the repair.
- Ask for a detailed final invoice upon completion.

Consumers can find out if a shop is licensed, file a complaint or get more information by calling the Department of Consumer Affairs hotline at 1-800-952-5210 or by visiting DCA's Web site at www.dca.gov.

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