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NEWS RELEASE

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RIVERSIDE STING OPERATION LEADS TO ARRESTS, CITATIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS ILLEGALLY ADVERTISING AUTO REPAIRS

Arrests underscore State Department of Consumer Affairs' efforts to halt unlicensed operators

RIVERSIDE – The California Department of Consumer Affairs/Bureau of Automotive Repair (DCA/BAR), in conjunction with the DCA Division of Investigation, took six people into custody during a sting operation in Riverside County targeting unregistered individuals advertising automotive repairs on the internet.

California state 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.

“Most businesses and professionals do a good job of providing services that benefit consumers,” said DCA Acting Director Brian Stiger. “The arrests are a vivid example of why it is important for consumers to make certain they are doing business only with licensed repair facilities.”

“Consumers may think they’re saving money when they go to an unlicensed auto repair shop,” said BAR Chief Sherry Mehl. “Consumers should make sure they do business only with licensed shops. That way, if they have a problem, BAR can step in and help them.”

Prior to the operation, BAR identified individuals advertising automotive repairs online. BAR investigators responded to the online ads and made appointments with these individuals to repair an automobile that BAR set up for the purpose of the sting.

At the appointment, BAR checked each individual's business license. Unlicensed individuals were cited for violating the law and advised that the matter would be referred to the Riverside County District Attorney's Office for adjudication.

In all, six 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 the status of a license, file a complaint or get more information by calling the Department of Consumer Affairs hotline at 1-800-952-5210 or on the DCA Web site at www.dca.gov.

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The Department of Consumer Affairs promotes and protects the interests of California Consumers. Consumers who wish to file a complaint against an auto repair facility can contact the Department of Consumer Affairs/Bureau of Automotive Repair at (800) 952-5210. Consumers can also file a complaint online at www.autorepair.ca.gov.