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

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

WEST SACRAMENTO – A sting operation conducted Wednesday by the Department of Consumer Affairs/Bureau of Automotive Repair (DCA/BAR), DCA's Division of Investigation, City of West Sacramento Police Department Code Enforcement, and the Yolo County District Attorney's office has resulted in the arrests of nine people for providing auto repair services without a license.

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 and 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. "Today's arrests are a vivid example of why it is important for consumers to make certain they are doing business only with licensed repair facilities."

"Because of the nature of automotive repairs, unlicensed activity by auto repair shops is especially risky to consumers," said BAR Chief Sherry Mehl. "However, unlicensed activity of any kind also harms law-abiding business people who have to deal with unfair competition."

During the sting, 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 Yolo County District Attorney's Office for adjudication.

The nine individuals who were taken into custody were 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.

This latest sting is the third such operation within the last four months by BAR's Sacramento field office targeting unregistered individuals who advertised auto repair services on the internet.

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 the DCA Web site at www.dca.gov.

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