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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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RIVERSIDE COUNTY SMOG CHECK STATION'S LICENSE SUSPENDED

Bureau of Automotive Repair alleges "clean plugging" by El Amigo Smog Check

RIVERSIDE – Owners and a technician at Riverside's El Amigo Smog Check have had their licenses suspended after investigators with the California Department of Consumer Affairs Bureau of Automotive Repair (Bureau) discovered the station was illegally sneaking cars past smog sensors, a practice known as "clean plugging."

The Automotive Repair Dealer registration and Smog Check station licenses have been suspended for the station located at 2774 Main St., Riverside. In addition, the Advanced Emission Specialist Technician license of employee Noe Cardenas was also suspended. The Bureau shut down El Amigo Smog Check to prevent Cardenas from being able to work as licensed Smog Check technician while an investigation continues.

The illegal activity of "clean plugging" consists of using another vehicle's properly functioning On Board Diagnostic (OBD II) system to generate a passing diagnostic reading. By doing this, technicians are illegally issuing smog certificates to vehicles that are not in smog compliance, or in some cases even present for testing.

"Clean plugging is a serious problem that undermines the integrity of the Smog Check program and adversely impacts the air we breathe," said Bureau Chief Sherry Mehl. "The Bureau is committed to taking swift action against Smog Check station owners and technicians who engage in these practices."

The Bureau administers the Smog Check program, which is a key component of the state's clean air efforts; more than 40 percent of air pollution comes from gasoline powered cars and trucks.

"Auto pollution is a threat to public health," said Department of Consumer Affairs Acting Director Brian Stiger. "The Bureau of Automotive Repair will continue to prosecute smog check station operators and technicians who defraud and endanger the public by keeping polluting cars on the road."

The Bureau has submitted the results of the investigation to the Office of the Riverside District Attorney for criminal prosecution.

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.

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