

# Crackdown on counterfeit inspections

## Officials dismantle billion-dollar industry

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AUSTIN (KXAN) - It's a billion-dollar business in Texas: Manufacturing counterfeit vehicle inspection stickers.

Of every five cars in Travis County, one is reportedly driving with one. Officials said many of the fakes are turning up on cars that would not pass emissions inspections, and that is hurting the air we breathe.

"Travis County is on the edge of being declared a dirty city, just like the Houston and Dallas area," said County Air Quality Project Manager Adele Noel. "EPA recently reduced the standard, and we're right on the edge."

Travis County commissioners are using \$443,000 from the Local Initiative Project grant to improve air quality in Central Texas. The grant pays for more officers, training and enforcement. Officers are so good at spotting the fakes, they can spot one going 55 mph.

The stickers are sometimes obvious because they look odd, Noel said.

On some, the Texas state is the wrong color, which should be burnt orange. On others, the state seal is faded, and the barcodes look fuzzy.

Still, counterfeiters are getting better at manufacturing fakes. And because of this, other stickers need a closer eye.

"They're hard to detect," said Alan Jacobsen, a licensed inspector at Alan's Inspections on North Lamar Boulevard. "People are getting pretty clever with counterfeit stickers."

Jacobson has inspected cars for more than 20 years, at least 40- to 50 a day. He's seen his share of fakes.

"Once we entered the emission phase of the inspection, a lot more cars out there weren't passing inspection for one reason or another," said Jacobson. "So we have started seeing a few more recently."

The fine for a fake sticker is \$169. But if counterfeiters are caught, they could go to jail and spend a minimum of two years behind bars for each fake sticker handed out.

Officials said some drivers had no idea they had a fake sticker because they had purchased a used car that already had one.

Meanwhile, officials are currently investigating who might be behind the fake stickers and where they are coming from.

<http://www.kxan.com/dpp/news/crime/counterfeit-inspection-sticker-crackdown>