



Crime Prevention Program of Southern California



INSIDE SCOOP

AN IMPORTANT NEWSLETTER TO OUR MEMBERS

SEPTEMBER 2009

CPP MEMBER EXPERIENCES IDENTITY THEFT & GRAND THEFT

By Lou Koven, CPP Investigator

On Tuesday, Sept 8, I met with Mike Ortiz of Sukut Equipment Inc to discuss using them for an upcoming article for the ECA magazine. During the meeting we discussed security and crime concerns and ways to making their company safer from thefts. A topic came up of how Sukut had been the victim of Identity Theft. Someone had impersonated a (former) Sukut employee and ordered \$3400 worth of tires from Pete's Road Service in Corona and charged them to Sukut. This was done in two occurrences on 7/10 & 7/23. Pete's Road Service billed Sukut for the purchases, although Sukut had not authorized and were unaware of them. Pete's discussed with Sukut possible civil action for the value of the purchases. I recognized this as Identity Theft and told Mike and his staff I would investigate what had happened. No one had contacted the police regarding this theft.

Later that day I went to Pete's in Corona and interviewed the employees that had witnessed the transactions. I was told they had cameras and possible video of the suspect involved. I was placed in contact with their GM Jim Van Horn. Jim provided me with a copy of the video, which showed a clear depiction of the suspect's vehicle.

On Friday, Sept 11, I spoke again with Jim Van Horn, who stated that the suspect was setting up another order of tires for that day. I encouraged him to let the suspect come for the tires. I contacted the Corona PD and advised the night watch commander of what had previously transpired. I requested a unit to respond to Pete's and await the arrival of the suspect. I put Corona PD in touch with Jim Van Horn to verify the unauthorized transactions and with Sam Valenzuela from Sukut to verify employee names and status.

The Corona PD staked out at Pete's and detained two suspects that arrived to pick-up the illegally ordered tires. The suspect's cooperated with the police investigation, saying they were only picking up the tires and it was for a friend. They led police back to the original perpetrator who had picked up the two previous loads of tires. During their follow-up investigation to the original suspect's residence, the police found other evidence to substantiate the original thefts along with some of the stolen tires previously taken. Jim Van Horn assisted the police in identifying the stolen tires. The suspect was arrested and booked last night on multiple felony counts, he was a repeat offender currently on felony probation and out on bail on other criminal charges.

I believe CPP was instrumental in protecting one of our members and assisting in bringing this to a successful conclusion.

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