



Ft. Pierce Police Department News Release



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Police warn residents to beware of pigeon drop scam

FORT PIERCE – Detectives investigating an increase in pigeon drop scams warn residents to be careful of strangers wanting to share found money with them.

In the past two months Detective Jason Braun and Detective David Cuti have investigated separate incidents where the victims were swindled out of \$1,000. In their investigations, the detectives uncovered two additional cases that occurred in near the beginning of 2007 that may be linked. The suspects and the method used to deceive the victims are the same, said Braun.

Based on the information, the two suspects are an older black male and female, who are well-dressed and act as if they are not together. The pair tends to target middle age to older age women, who are by themselves and well-dressed or wearing a uniform. The crimes have occurred near a bank.

“It appears the suspects are staying in the area,” Braun said. “The crimes seem to be happening in the fall and winter months.”

Detective Cuti said, “The female suspect usually poses as an unsuspecting victim along with the real victim, the "pigeon," while the male suspect approaches them with money he claims to have just found.”

The con artists agree to split the money with the real victim. The targeted victim was told they would have to wait a month before they could spend their share of the found money. The suspect then instructs the targeted victim to prove they have the means to live for a month by withdrawing money from their bank account and giving it to the suspect. The female suspect pretends to give her male suspect her portion as a way to show the targeted victim that scam is legitimate. Then the male suspect instructs the targeted victim to meet with a fake person, who will explain the details.

Braun said, “A good way to tell is something is a scam is to ask yourself “if this too good to be true?”

Tips to avoid scams

- If the situation seems unusual or if you feel uncomfortable, just walk away.
- Trust only people you know. Do not trust someone because he or she has a friendly voice or appears to be an authoritative figure. Swindlers usually are friendly and have honest faces and pleasant personalities. That is how they gain your trust -- and steal your money.
- Talk to a law enforcement officer or your banker before withdrawing large sums of money at someone else's suggestion.

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