



CITY OF HARRISONBURG
POLICE
DEPARTMENT

INTERIM CHIEF OF POLICE GABRIEL CAMACHO

101 NORTH MAIN STREET, HARRISONBURG, VA 22802

EMERGENCY NUMBER: 911

NONEMERGENCY NUMBER: (540) 434-4436

FAX NUMBER: (540) 437-2691

WWW.HARRISONBURGVA.GOV/POLICE

For Immediate Release

April 6, 2021

Contact: Sergeant Scott Drugo, HPD Public Information Officer

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HPD Investigates Fraudulent Credit Card Purchases

Harrisonburg, Va. – The Harrisonburg Police Department is presently investigating several cases of lawn equipment and vehicle theft with fraudulent credit cards.

Local businesses have reported individuals making approximately \$40,000 worth of purchases over the phone with a credit card that was obtained from an unsuspecting victim. The caller will arrange payment, hire a local tow company to pick up the merchandise, and deliver it to a predetermined location. The merchandise will go through various other modes of transportation and eventually be sold, typically out of the area. This strategy is used to keep the suspect far away from the purchase and not involved in the sale. The suspect is often related to someone in the chain of custody. This type of buying and selling makes investigating the crime very difficult.

Police recommend businesses review their purchase policies and consider mandating the person who calls in the order must be the one who picks up the item(s) and limit the dollar amounts that are acceptable to be placed on a credit card over the phone. Sellers should also make sure the person picking up the merchandise brings the credit card used to make the transaction as well as valid identification.

Our local cases have the following elements:

- The buyer wants to purchase lawn equipment or a vehicle over the phone.
- The provided driver's licenses and credit cards are fraudulently used.
- Suspect's story is often that they are buying the vehicle for someone else, or they live a few hours away and will arrange for the pickup of the merchandise.
- Suspect hires a tow company to transport the purchased vehicle.

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Local businesses should be suspicious of over-the-phone transactions, especially if the caller wants to rush the purchase.

HPD offers these recommendations to mitigate being victimized by this type of fraud and theft. It is not a complete list of steps to prevent the crime from occurring.

HPD asks anyone who may have questions or related information on this type of crime to contact HPD's Major Crimes Unit by calling (540) 437-2640.

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