



SHERIFF'S OFFICE

MADERA COUNTY

14143 Road 28
Madera, CA 93638

John P. Anderson
Sheriff-Coroner

Phone: (559) 675-7976

Contact: *Erica H. Stuart, P.I.O.*

Cell: (559) 232-8756

E-Mail: estuart@co.madera.ca.gov

DATE: Thursday September 20, 2012

TO: NEWS MEDIA

RE: SHERIFF UNCOVERS MAJOR SKIMMING OPERATION

More than 50 victims already, Sheriff believes there may be more

MADERA COUNTY – Sheriff John Anderson is issuing an alert to all valley residents about a skimming operation that has already victimized more than 50 gas station customers just in Madera County alone.

“That figure continues to grow as card holders discover fraudulent charges on their monthly statements.”

The identity theft reportedly started a couple of months ago in Tulare, where a Shell station was hit. Then, a skimming ring struck a Shell station in Fresno.

Madera was the third county to get hit.

Right now, it appears only one Shell station got targeted in Madera County – located on Avenue 12 in the Madera Ranchos, where personal information was siphoned from unwitting drivers who gassed up between August 30 and September 10.

Since then, 27 victims have come forward ... but a bank, also investigating fraudulent charges, reports that it discovered more than 50. All of these victims purchased gas at the Shell Station in the Ranchos.

Sheriff Anderson says the only way cardholders learned they had fallen victim to fraud was after receiving a monthly statement, which showed major high-dollar purchases in Southern California.

Unbeknownst to the filling stations, someone successfully attached a skimmer around August 30 and removed that skimmer on September 10.

In that period of time, those involved in the operation made off with thousands and thousands of dollars' worth of merchandise purchased with the stolen credit card information.

But skimmers don't just pull numbers; they also swipe from you all confidential and personal data that belongs to your credit card.

The thieves are not only making off with high-dollar items, they are also using that skimmed data to open their own accounts at the cardholders' expense.

No one was seen applying the skimmer, and it would be nearly impossible for a customer to know it was even there.

Anyone who may have information about the skimming ring is urged to not only call the Sheriff's office at 559-675-7770, they can also call CRIME STOPPERS at 498-STOP. An anonymous tip to Crime Stoppers that leads to an arrest could be worth up to \$1,000

Meantime, Sheriff Anderson urges consumers to do a credit check themselves; and if fraud is discovered, report it immediately.

Consumers can do this by logging on to one of the following Credit Bureau agencies:

Equifax: http://www.equifax.com/home/en_us

Experian: <http://www.experian.com/>

Trans Union: <http://www.transunion.com/>