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## Credit Card Thieves Targeting Route 4 Stations Auditor Inspections Yield Third Skimmer in 5 Days

HAMILTON, Ohio – Butler County Auditor inspectors have found an illegal credit card skimmer at a fourth gas station along Route 4 in Hamilton and Fairfield. The latest was found Wednesday at the Marathon station located at 2693 Dixie Highway.

“Gas station owners need to strengthen the security of these pumps,” said Butler County Auditor Roger Reynolds, noting this is the 11<sup>th</sup> skimmer found in the county since November 2015. “And we need to start seeing some arrests made for these crimes.”

Auditor inspectors found two other skimmers along Route 4 on Saturday, Dec. 17. One was found at the Mobil station at the Fairfield Food Mart (7157 Dixie Highway) and the other was found at the BP station at 20 N. Erie Blvd. in Hamilton. The 2963 Dixie Highway location had also been inspected on Saturday and all pumps were clear.

The first skimmer found in a pump along Route 4 was back on May 25 at a Marathon station located at 6100 Dixie Highway in Fairfield.

Inspectors with the Auditor’s Office have now found three skimmers since Saturday as it appears this criminal activity is ramping up ahead of the Christmas holiday driving season.

Marathon stations have been the primary target in Butler County. Five of the skimmers in the county have been found at four different Marathons. Two BPs as well as a Mobil, Shell and Sunoco station have also been targeted.

In an effort to keep the pumps as safe as possible from fraud, Auditor Reynolds has had additional inspectors on duty since June. They have made more than 28 skimmer checks of every gas pump at approximately 120 service stations in the county.

When a credit card is run through a skimmer, the small device stores the cardholder’s data. Once the credit information is obtained, the thief can then sell the information or clone the credit card. All the devices found so far in the county have been located inside fuel pumps.

For those that continue to pay with a card instead of cash, debit cards should be avoided. When a debit card passes through a skimmer, the PIN and the account number are stolen, allowing direct access to the person’s checking account.

## **Tips for Stations**

- Activity at gas stations should be closely and securely monitored by station managers and attendants.
- Gas pumps should be opened up and the internal mechanisms examined regularly by station staff.
- The most effective way to stop these scams is to install better, more secure locks on every pump. Better locks will prohibit unauthorized access to a gas pump's interior components.

## **Tips for Consumers**

- NEVER use a debit card when paying for gas at the pump. Thieves can steal PIN numbers.
- Report any unusual activity or anything that looks out of place.
- Monitor monthly bank and credit card statements for fraudulent charges.
- Use cash or prepaid cards to pay for purchases whenever possible.
- If you believe you have been a victim of a skimmer scam, notify local law enforcement and your credit card issuer immediately.