



U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of Inspector General

Office of the
Secretary of
Transportation 61
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CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE ALERT

DATE: December 18, 2007

SUBJECT: Illegal Transportation of Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT)

OVERVIEW: In 2005, federal, state and local agencies in Miami, Florida, conducted several operations involving the theft and illegal transportation of gasoline and diesel fuel. Since the arrests and prosecutions of these individuals, the central and northern parts of Florida have seen an increase in this type of criminal activity, specifically in September and October 2007.

BACKGROUND: Gasoline and diesel fuel are classified as a Class 3 HAZMAT and are subject to federal regulations that govern the transportation of HAZMAT. In addition to local theft charges, individuals stealing large quantities of gasoline and diesel fuel can potentially be charged federally under Title 49 United States Code, Section 5124, for the illegal transportation of HAZMAT if they fail to transport the stolen fuel correctly.

DETAILS: Two methods have primarily been used to steal gasoline and diesel fuel.

METHOD 1: Subjects may use a pick-up truck to haul an enclosed trailer. Inside the enclosed trailer are tanks used to store the fuel and pumps to siphon the fuel from the service station's underground reservoir tanks into the tanks located in the enclosed trailer. Subjects pull their trailer over the underground reservoir tanks at a selected service station, and open a trap door usually cut in the floor of the enclosed trailer. Subjects remove the cover to the underground reservoir tanks from inside the trailer and drop a hose into the underground tanks. Subjects use a pump to siphon the gasoline and/or diesel fuel into the tanks located in the enclosed trailer. This method may take up to an hour or more if subjects siphon large quantities of fuel, and occasionally the driver of the pick-up truck will lift the hood of their vehicle to make it appear as if they are broken down while stealing the fuel.

LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE

Shown below is a picture of Hobert GIBSON's trailer. GIBSON was arrested in Polk County, Florida, on October 16, 2007, for stealing fuel from a Circle K and a Cumberland Farms gas station.



METHOD 2: Subjects obtain fraudulent credit cards. Subjects use the fraudulent credit cards at gas stations to purchase fuel at the station's pump. Subjects pump the fuel into large tanks they have placed in the back of their pick- up truck or van. Shown below are pictures of a pick up truck identified in Operation Gas Leak, Miami, FL. The truck was used to store and transport stolen fuel obtained at the pump via fraudulent credit cards.



Operation Gas Leak also identified vans being used to store and transport stolen fuel.





Shown below is the pump used to siphon the fuel.



HAZARD TO PUBLIC SAFETY:

The illegal transportation of HAZMAT poses a serious public safety threat, and could potentially become a homeland security threat. Below are pictures of one subject's vehicle after it caught fire at a gas station while subject was stealing fuel.





If you receive information that large quantities of fuel are being stolen and transported in your area or if you have any questions reference this criminal intelligence report, please contact your nearest United States Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General Office: Miami Office - (305) 716-3129 Jacksonville Post of Duty - (904) 777-6710 Tampa Post of Duty - (813) 253-1310

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