



## **Five Credit Card Skimmers Found in County Auditor Statewide Sweep**

***Inspectors checked nearly 12,000 gas pumps for credit card skimmers***

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Montgomery County Auditor Karl Keith announced that inspectors removed five illegal credit card skimming devices from Ohio gas pumps as part of the "Skimmer Sweep" hosted over Labor Day Weekend by Keith, Ashtabula County Auditor Roger Corlett and more than 60 other Ohio county auditors.

Two skimmers were found in Erie County and one skimmer was found in each of Fulton, Sandusky and Greene counties. Inspectors notified law enforcement of the findings and the devices were turned over for investigation.

During the search more than 80 weights and measures inspectors visited nearly 1,400 gas stations at targeted locations, checking nearly 12,000 gas pumps.

270 pumps were checked at 39 stations in Ashtabula County according to Auditor Corlett. No credit card skimmers were found.

"Although no skimmers were found here, we will continue to be proactive in addressing the skimming crime in our county," said Corlett.

Keith coordinated the strategic Skimmer Sweep effort as co-chair of the County Auditors Association of Ohio (CAAO) weights and measures committee. The auditors have been planning the sweep for more than three months.

"The Skimmer Sweep was a tremendous success. It's unheard of to have 64 elected officials united in the same effort. That's more than two-thirds of county auditors," said Keith. "I thank Auditor Corlett for his leadership and dedication to protecting consumers."

With the Skimmer Sweep findings, at least 35 skimming devices have been found in Ohio gas pumps since last October. The devices have now been found in 16 counties across the state. Before the sweep, most had been found in southwest Ohio.

There is now reason to believe northwest Ohio is being targeted. A skimmer was found in Henry County less than two weeks ago and the sweep uncovered four skimmers in northwest counties. These skimmers were found at gas stations far from major roads, which shows that skimmers are not found only in high traffic areas. Officials and gas station operators will want to be more active in monitoring stations in the northwest corner of the state, according to Keith.

The goal of the initiative was not only to remove skimmers to protect holiday travelers, but also to make consumers, gas station managers and gas station attendants aware of the crime. When inspectors went to gas stations to check pumps they explained to the attendants what skimmers were and what steps they could take to protect themselves and their customers.

“Ultimately, that’s how we defeat this crime, by educating the public on how they can protect themselves,” said Keith. “The Skimmer Sweep was a great success in that regard.”

Consumers should know that paying for gas with cash is always the safest option at the pump. Using a credit card is safer than using a debit card, because customers who use their debit cards risk their PIN numbers being stolen. Monthly bank and credit card statements should always be reviewed for any fraudulent charges. Motorists should use pumps near the attendant, as criminals often target pumps further from view. Anything that seems out of place or indicates that a pump has been tampered with should be reported.

Credit card scamming devices can be used to steal credit card and debit card numbers as well as PIN numbers for the purpose of identity theft. Additionally, these devices often have Bluetooth technology, which allow identity thieves to access private information from a distance up to 100 yards.

The Skimmer Sweep is one of a number of measures county auditors are taking to respond to gas pump skimmers. The county auditors have hosted nine public “Skimmer Summits” throughout Ohio to raise awareness about the dangers of gas pump skimmers and teach prevention measures to gas station owners, law enforcement officers and interested individuals.

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