



PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE

COMMUNITY AWARENESS BULLETIN

CAB 001-22

August 26, 2022

ROMANIAN TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION

The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) is advising Pennsylvania residents of a recent influx of crimes being committed by Romanian transnational criminals. These criminals, usually described as appearing Middle Eastern or Hispanic, may pose as stranded motorists claiming to be in need of funds and willing to part with gold jewelry marked "18k." The jewelry is later determined to be counterfeit once taken to a jewelry store or pawn shop. Oftentimes they will overwhelm an individual with close contact before stealing jewelry off their victims. These individuals may approach customers in parking lots and inside casinos. To obtain sympathy from the victim, they will often tell a story of being down on their luck and needing money to return home to Florida for a funeral. Other narratives include hungry children, a sick family member, or running late for a business meeting. They often travel with families in newer high-end or luxury out-of-state vehicles. Because they are transient, they move quickly from city-to-city and state-to-state and will not stay in one area for long.

Romanian transnational criminals commit a variety of crimes, including:

- Counterfeit jewelry scams;
- Quick-change schemes at retail locations;
- Cell phone thefts at retail locations;
- Gym locker thefts at fitness facilities;
- Jewelry store distraction thefts; and
- Placing skimming devices on ATMs and at self-check-out registers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The PSP reminds residents to remain vigilant of their surroundings and consider the following recommendations. If something does not seem right, report the suspicious incident to your local law enforcement agency immediately.

- Use caution if approached by an individual attempting to sell gold jewelry. While the jewelry may be stamped with "18k," it is likely not real.
- Do not feel pressured into purchasing jewelry, or any other item, even if the individual is telling a convincing story of being down on their luck and are desperate for money.
- If something seems too good to be true, it likely is.
- Ask the seller very specific questions about the product, origin, and brand, and tell them you want the jewelry appraised.
- **Never** leave with a stranger to go to an ATM to retrieve money to purchase jewelry or other items.
- If you witness individual(s) attempting to flag down motorists while standing on the side of the highway, contact law enforcement immediately and do not approach them.
- Be aware of the potential for ATM skimmers at self-check-out registers and gas station pumps. Possible signs of tampering include buttons that are difficult to press or are not working correctly; graphics that are misaligned; components that look or feel different from the rest of the machine; machines that are side-by-side that look different.
- Monitor your banking accounts for any suspicious transactions.



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The free *See Something, Send Something* smartphone application enables individuals to report suspicious activity by capturing a photograph, screenshot, and other information to send it directly to the Pennsylvania State Police. Tips may also be sent to tips@pa.gov.



If you have been the victim of a counterfeit jewelry scam, report the incident to law enforcement and provide detailed physical descriptions of the individuals and the vehicles they were driving.