
NEWS RELEASE

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COUNTERFEIT MONEY SCAMS

Every year, the Tucson Police Department Fraud Unit conducts countless investigations into various fraud-related crimes. One such crime that Fraud Unit detectives have been noticing of late involves counterfeit money scams. In recent weeks, the frequency of scams of this nature has increased. What is different about the recent incidents is that, as opposed to many counterfeit scams where a business entity is typically the victim after someone uses a counterfeit bill to pay for services or products, the more recent cases involve individual citizen victims.

An individual citizen can become a victim of a counterfeit money scam during the direct exchange of currency between two people. Many of the cases of this nature have occurred in the parking lots of convenience stores or gas stations. For example, a suspect will walk up to a citizen in the parking lot and ask if the citizen can make change for them. The citizens that have fallen victim to this scam have not initially realized that they exchanged real currency for counterfeit money until long after the suspect(s) left the area. Instances where this has occurred thus far have involved denominations of \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100 bills. Additionally, counterfeit currency has been used at garage or yard sales to pay for items sold at the sales. It isn't until later that the sellers realize they have been given counterfeit money.

Fraud detectives urge the public to use extra caution when exchanging money with other citizens, especially ones that are not known to them, to avoid becoming a victim of these scams. The method by which a citizen can try to determine whether or not currency is fake is to thoroughly examine the bill. True United States paper currency, especially in higher denominations, should have a security line or strip embedded in the bill. This security line/strip is visible when the currency is held up to the light. Additionally, Fraud detectives advise that the "feel" of counterfeit paper money usually can be a clue, as it can feel more stiff, waxy, or thicker than true currency. When in doubt, it is always safer to not accept suspected counterfeit money, thereby avoiding the possibility of becoming a victim of these crimes.

The United States Secret Service is the primary entity charged with investigations involving counterfeit currency in all forms. For additional information about how to identify counterfeit currency or how to report instances where counterfeit monies have been utilized, please visit <http://www.secretservice.gov/criminal.shtml>.

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