



Williston Police Department

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Press Release

July 13, 2009

Computer fraud, fraudulent company checks and internal theft have dominated the action for Williston Police Officers in recent weeks. A Williston man wired \$25,000 to California to purchase a boat on EBay. There is no boat, the bank account in California has been cleaned out and the suspect has disappeared. Another resident thought he had his pickup sold on Craig's List. The would-be buyer sent a check for the truck and money to pay a transporter. The check is bad. There will be no sale. In another area case, a person expressed interest in a horse for sale on EBay. EBay warned that the potential buyer was reported previously as bogus, and the deal was nixed. All these events have happened here in the past two weeks.

Company checks from at least three area businesses have been duplicated and cashed in recent months, the last two weeks ago. Police believe the perpetrators are coming out of the Tampa area. One 19 year old, who has been identified as a computer genius, has been arrested and his related cases were turned over to the U.S. Attorney's Office. Other cases continue, however, with check amounts escalating from about \$300 with the first group involving the 19 year old, to now over \$1900 for each of the last three checks.

A manager and assistant manager of a local discount merchandise chain have been terminated after a \$5000 deposit never reached the bank. The assistant manager is being charged with felony theft.

On Friday July 10, a local fuel depot noticed unusual charges to a small logging company. The subsequent investigation revealed a driver was using his company's credit card to refuel trucks belonging to others. Thousands of dollars have been lost. The driver has been arrested and charged with felony theft. He is out on bond pending trial.

Area residents are cautioned to use extreme caution with internet transactions and to closely scrutinize every transaction. Locating suspects many states away and who have fled those areas is extremely difficult for law enforcement. Ask the website if they have information on a potential buyer or seller. Avoid the temptation to receive a check for more than the asking price if you are a seller. There should be no reason to wire money back to anyone. This is an immediate clue that something is wrong.

Area companies must keep a close watch on their bank accounts, especially their monthly statements, and minimize their account balances. Likewise, credit card accounts must be watched carefully for abuses. Deposits should be made daily, and the deposit process should involve at



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least two people for a check and double check on the process. The explosive growth of the internet and tough economic times have no doubt contributed to these realities.

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