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Auditor Warns of Possible “Skimmers” at Local Gas Stations

Mahoning County, OH - Mahoning County Auditor Ralph Meacham is warning consumers that credit card “skimmers” have been found on gas pumps in several counties in Ohio.

A credit card skimmer is a small electronic device placed inside of non-locking gas pump that can be installed by criminals in less than two minutes. Most of the time, gas pumps furthest away from the gas attendant are targeted but criminals have been known to pull up to any pump in a moving truck to block the view of security cameras while they open the pumps to install the equipment. The skimmer captures your credit card information when you insert it into the pump. Then the criminals simply go back to the gas station and retrieve the stolen credit card data wirelessly just by getting within feet of the pump. Next thing the consumer knows, there are fraudulent charges on their credit card statement.

So far, skimmers have been found on gas pumps in Hamilton, Warren, Butler, Fayette, Union, Washington and Montgomery counties. Many times the county weights and measures inspectors find the illegal equipment when they are conducting their gas pump inspections. The inspectors notify the police who then begin their investigation.

While the skimmers are undetectable to consumers, there are ways to protect yourself. The most effective way is to pay cash for your gas or go inside to pay with your credit card. Also be sure to check your credit statement each month for fraudulent charges.

Ohio county auditors are working together to protect consumers by providing additional training for their inspectors to help them detect the skimmers. “If you see anything suspicious at a gas pump, notify the gas station attendant, the police or my office immediately,” Auditor Meacham stated.

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