



Lower Providence Township

100 PARKLANE DRIVE • EAGLEVILLE, PA 19403

Phone: (610) 539-8020 Fax: (610) 539-6347

E-mail: admin@lowerprovidence.org

www.lowerprovidence.org



ATM Skimmer Scam Investigation Results in Arrest of Multiple Defendants

LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP (January 14, 2011) – Montgomery County District Attorney Risa Vetri Ferman, Chester County District Attorney Joseph W. Carroll, Lower Providence Chief of Police Francis Carroll, Lower Merion Township Police Superintendent Michael McGrath, Springfield Township Chief of Police Randall Hummel, West Whiteland Police Chief Ralph Burton, and Captain Timothy McDonald and Lt. David Buckley of the Pennsylvania State Police announce the arrest of Dimitar Tanchev, Dragomir Lipov, Ismail Misankov, Dimcho Vasilev and Krasimir Uzunov.

The defendants are charged with Corrupt Organizations, Identity Theft, Unlawful Device Making Equipment, Dealing in Proceeds of Unlawful Activity, Theft by Deception, Access Device Fraud and Criminal Conspiracy.

Between October 1, 2010 and December 23, 2010, residents in Montgomery and Chester counties reported to law enforcement that money had been withdrawn from their checking accounts without their knowledge or permission.

An investigation revealed that during that time period, the above-named defendants placed “Skimmer” devices on ATM machines at several Citizens Bank and Wells Fargo Bank branches in Lower Providence Township, Springfield Township, and Lower Merion Townships in Montgomery County and West Whiteland Township in Chester County.

Skimmer devices are sophisticated machines placed discreetly over the card-slot of an ATM machine. The devices are used in conjunction with a hidden pinhole camera. When a customer uses a compromised ATM machine to make a transaction, the Skimmer device captures electronic information from their ATM card and the pinhole camera records the customer entering their PIN number. The information captured from the Skimmer is then used to create a fraudulent ATM card, which can be used to steal money from an unsuspecting customer’s account.

The investigation further revealed the defendants used the stolen information to make withdrawals using compromised ATM card information from ATM machines throughout the region. At this point investigators have discovered 143 victims. The defendants are responsible for \$134,570.57 worth of fraudulent withdrawals from the 143 victims’ accounts.

The five were taken into custody at a hotel in Lower Providence Township. Searches of the rooms that the group occupied produced skimming devices and other devices integral to the criminal operation. Additional searches of vehicles, a hotel room in Chester County and a storage locker that had been rented by the group in West Norriton Township produced additional evidence related to the investigation.

The United States Secret Service and Immigration and Customs Enforcement have assisted in the investigation. The defendants were provided a preliminary arraignment before Magisterial District Judge Cathleen Kelly Rebar on Friday, January 14, 2011. Bail was set at \$250,000.00 cash. All five were committed to the Montgomery County Correctional Facility in default of bail. Additionally, Uzonov, Tanchev, and Lipov had immigration detainers filed against them. A preliminary hearing is scheduled before Magisterial District Judge Rebar on Wednesday, January 19, 2011. The cases will be prosecuted by the Captain of the Economic Crime Unit Katherine McGill Magid. If anyone has further information about this or other incidents involving Skimmer devices, please contact Lower Providence Detectives at (610) 539-5900.

Approved for release:
Risa Vetri Ferman

CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY
ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND
UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY

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