Man Identified Breaking into Butler County Gas Pump
Arrested in Louisville by FBI for Installing Skimmers
Auditor Camera Footage Aids in Investigation

HAMILTON, Ohio – The diligence of Butler County Auditor Roger Reynolds to doggedly pursue illegal credit card skimmers and make life difficult for those who engage in this criminal activity has paid dividends as the FBI has arrested a man for installing skimmers on gas pumps in Butler and Hamilton counties.

“If you install skimmers in Butler County I’m going to confiscate your devices, catch you on camera and you will be prosecuted,” said Auditor Reynolds.

According to the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Ohio, Yosbel Ponce Bernal, 26, has been charged with using gas pump skimmers in Butler and Hamilton counties. Ponce is a Cuban national with a Florida address who has sought asylum in the U.S. He was arrested in Louisville, Ky. on Friday.

“It’s unfortunate we take people into our country who repay our act of kindness by stealing from us,” Reynolds said.

The FBI used visual information obtained by the Butler County Auditor’s Office in October to help ID Ponce, along with fingerprints collected from a pump in Hamilton County. Several prominent tattoos are visible in the footage captured by the video camera placed inside the pump last September following the discovery of two illegal credit card skimmers. The skimming devices had information stored from 27 credit cards.

The Auditor’s Office contacted the Cincinnati office of the FBI at that time and shared the video footage from October with the agency.

The camera footage not only provided several minutes of identifying information of a criminal suspect, but also uncovered a new technique used to install skimmers inside a dispenser.
Butler County Auditor Weights and Measures Manager Tom Kamphaus immediately shared this new information with surrounding counties and Hamilton County Weights and Measures inspectors quickly found three skimmers they would not otherwise have discovered with a routine inspection.

According to an affidavit filed in support of the criminal complaint, video surveillance from the Hamilton County location also allegedly depicts Ponce. Additionally, law enforcement officials tested the gas pump for fingerprints and matched two prints to Ponce. Ponce’s fingerprints are on record from previously applying for asylum.

Using a skimmer is a federal crime punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

The two skimmers found in Butler County gas stations on Sept.13 brought the total number at that time to 24 in a three-year span. No skimmers have been found in Butler County since then even though weekly inspections continue.

“We’ve put a lot of time into our inspection and surveillance program so I’m pleased there has been an arrest,” said Reynolds. “We’ve been aggressive in trying to protect consumers from becoming victims of fraud. It’s great to get one guy in custody but the criminal activity will continue as long as old pumps are being used.”

U.S. Attorney Benjamin C. Glassman commended the investigation of this case by the FBI and Butler County Auditor’s Office, and Special Assistant United States Attorney Timothy Landry, who is prosecuting the case.

When a credit card is run through a skimmer, the small device stores the cardholder’s data. Once the credit information is obtained, the thief can then sell the information or clone the credit card. The skimmer is installed between the credit card reader and the other internal circuitry of the gas pump. The intended gas purchase will typically proceed without interruption of any kind or any notification to the victim or third party.

According to the U.S. Attorney’s Office, a single gas station skimmer is capable of storing credit card information for hundreds of victims, and many skimmers are capable of storing approximately thousands of card numbers.