



Agricultural Commissioner's Office
Weights & Measures ■ County of Santa Barbara

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NEWS RELEASE

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September 11, 2020
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

County Weights and Measures Inspectors Protect Credit Card Users from Skimmer Fraud

During recent months, credit card theft devices (commonly known as skimmers) have been detected in Santa Barbara County. Though it is unknown how widespread the problem is, Inspectors from the Santa Barbara County Agriculture/Weights & Measures Department will be increasing their enforcement surveillance at fuel stations. This is aimed at the credit card skimming devices found inside gasoline pumps at service stations throughout the county. These skimmers may be found spliced into the credit card reader, allowing the card information to be recorded during routine refueling and later retrieved or sent to an offsite receiver.

Usually there are no externally visible signs on the fuel pumps showing the presence of these hidden devices. Inspectors must work closely with station operators to examine the pumps and visually find these skimmers. Once found, these devices are removed and inspectors follow up with our local, state and federal law enforcement partners.

In the last two months, 9 skimmer devices were found at four separate gas stations. This led to the Agricultural Commissioner/Weight & Measures Department conducting a countywide sweep of over 40 selected gas stations to search for these insidious skimmers. The good news is that no skimmers were found and that our county staff will continually be on the lookout for these devices while performing our fuel station inspections.

Matthew Maiten, Deputy Sealer offers the following precautions to consumers to avoid credit card information theft: "pay cash for fuel purchases; use debit cards which may offer greater protection due to the additional PIN needed for transactions; use gas pumps closest to the service station attendants; watch for security stickers that appear broken or tampered with. Also, consumers should always review their credit card and banking statements for suspicious charges."

For more information contact the Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner/Weights&Measures Office in Santa Barbara at 805-681-5600 or in Santa Maria at 805-934-6200 or visit www.agcommissioner.com.