

Lake County Sheriff's Office

Christopher Covelli, Lieutenant
Public Information Officer
Desk: 847.377.4180
Fax: 847.984.5738
Date: September 3, 2021



25 S. Martin Luther King Jr., Ave
Waukegan, Illinois 60087

www.lakecountyil.gov/sheriff

John D. Idleburg
Sheriff

MEDIA RELEASE

Man Apprehended with Dozens of Fraudulently Re-Encoded Cards, Dozens of Victims Likely

On September 2, 2021, at approximately 11:30 a.m., Lake County Sheriff's Deputies were dispatched to a gas station in the 36700 block of North Route 41, Unincorporated Gurnee, for a suspicious circumstance report. An alert gas station attendant became suspicious after the driver of an Isuzu box truck put \$1,000.00 worth of diesel fuel into the truck and utilized two separate credit cards to do so. The clerk knew a small box truck of that size would not take \$1,000.00 worth of diesel fuel and it was odd the driver used two credit cards.

The clerk alerted their supervisor and their supervisor also became suspicious, as the store had recently been scammed during a similar situation. The driver of the box truck left the gas station and the supervisor followed the box truck, after calling 911. The supervisor was able to inform sheriff's deputies as to the location of the box truck.

Sheriff's deputies located the box truck in the area of Delany Road and Sunset Avenue in Gurnee. Sheriff's deputies activated their emergency lights in an attempt to conduct a traffic stop, but the driver initially did not stop. The driver threw a bag out of the window prior to stopping. The driver, identified as Ernesto Fallat, 52, of the 1100 block of North Monticello Avenue, eventually stopped and was arrested for numerous traffic violations.

Sheriff's deputies recovered the bag Fallat threw out the window and discovered dozens of gift cards with a magnetic strip, which were likely fraudulently reprogrammed with the credit card information of unknowing victims. Sheriff's deputies also discovered the box truck was holding several containers equaling approximately 1,000 gallons of diesel fuel. The system was rigged so Fallat could look like he was filling-up his truck with diesel, however, the diesel would go directly to the containers inside the truck.

Fallat was subsequently charged with:

Identity Theft

Attempting to Flee/Elude

Several Traffic Violations

Fallat is scheduled for an initial court appearance this morning.

Sheriff's detectives continue investigating, in an effort to identify potential victims who had their credit card data stolen and fraudulently used. The Illinois State Police will be conducting an inspection of the Isuzu to determine if there are hazardous material violations.

Additional criminal charges are likely.

The Lake County Sheriff's Office reminds the community to regularly check your credit card transactions and report any fraudulent activity to your local police department and financial institution.

All defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.

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