



CITY OF CLEARWATER

POST OFFICE BOX 4748, CLEARWATER, FLORIDA 33758-4748
CLEARWATER POLICE DEPARTMENT, 645 PIERCE STREET, CLEARWATER, FLORIDA 33756
TELEPHONE (727) 562-4242

POLICE DEPARTMENT

RELEASE 09-125
September 16, 2009

Contact: Elizabeth Watts
Public Safety PIO
elizabeth.watts@myclearwater.com
(727) 562-4333

SUSPECT ARRESTED AFTER PASSING HUNDREDS OF FRAUDULENT MONEY ORDERS

WHO: Raul Francisco Zelaya

DOB: 08-20-58

2207 Hampstead Court

Safety Harbor, Fla.

CHARGES: Scheme to Defraud Financial Institution (2nd degree felony)

Communications Fraud (2nd degree felony)

Possession of Counterfeit Checks

2 Counts Grand Theft (2nd & 3rd degree)

Uttering Forged Check

WHAT: Scheme to Defraud

SEIZED: 251 Western Union Money Orders (\$850/each)

WHEN: September 15, 2009 (Suspect Arrested)
11:00 a.m.

WHERE: Dunkin Donuts
2551 Gulf to Bay Boulevard
Clearwater, Fla.

Greyhound Bus Station
2815 Gulf to Bay Boulevard
Clearwater, Fla.

WHY: On September 10, 2009, a woman reported that an acquaintance attempted to entice her to cash 28 fraudulent Western Union money orders. The suspect met the complainant at the Dunkin Donuts on Gulf to Bay Boulevard in Clearwater. He gave her the money orders, valued at \$850.00 each and asked her to cash them





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so they would not be traced back to him. She turned the money orders over to police, which were entered into evidence.

The Clearwater Police Department Economic Crimes Unit linked the suspect to another case, where he fraudulently cashed US Postal Service money order at the Greyhound Bus Station on Gulf to Bay Boulevard on August 29, 2009.

On September 15, 2009, detectives made contact with the suspect at his residence and took him into custody without incident. Police recovered an additional 243 counterfeit money orders. The total value of the money orders was over 230,000 dollars. Detectives say the suspect knew the money orders were counterfeit. The suspect had previously been arrested by the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office for the same crime. Additional charges are pending and the investigation continues...

The suspect obtained the fraudulent checks from an online check cashing scam. These scams commonly appear as online as "work from home" job opportunities and can be posted on websites or come through spam email. The "company" asks people to cash checks or money orders, keep a portion and return the remainder of the money to the "company." If a person is caught cashing a fraudulent check stemming from this type of scam, they are informed that this activity is illegal. If they continue to attempt to cash fraudulent checks or money orders, they will be arrested and charged accordingly.

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