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# News Release

## Suspects in wallet thefts at local stores part of multistate spree

*ACPD connects traveling thieves to similar incidents in 11 other communities*

**ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (June 2, 2020)** — The Arkansas City Police Department has gathered more information about a trio of suspected thieves who stole wallets in several grocery stores in Arkansas City.

A little after 11 a.m. April 30, an Arkansas City resident was the victim of theft of a wallet from her purse while she was shopping at Dillons, located at 425 N. Summit St. The three suspects were seen leaving the store in a gray four-door sport utility vehicle.

A short time later, the victim's credit card was used to make a purchase of gift cards and clothing in excess of \$2,300 at Walmart, located at 2701 N. Summit St.

The theft in Arkansas City was thought to be an isolated incident until a few days later, when investigators were alerted that the same suspects had allegedly committed the same crime in Wichita on April 29, when they stole a wallet from an open purse in a grocery store, then proceeded to a Target store to buy gift cards. The same gray SUV was spotted on video in the area.

A few days after the thefts in Wichita and Arkansas City, a Wisconsin law enforcement agency reached out to Wichita police with information pertaining to the thieves. It was determined that the same suspects had victimized shoppers in Janesville, Wisconsin, on May 10 and Mt. Pleasant, Wisconsin, on May 11. Video surveillance there was able to determine the vehicle used was a gray 2017 Honda Pilot.

The Arkansas City Police Department reached out to other agencies and learned the suspects had been in El Dorado, also on April 30. Digging even further, the police department was able to put together a timeline involving this group of three suspects across the West and Midwest, dating back to March 30:

- **March 30** — Reno, Nevada;
- **March 31** — Carson City, Nevada;
- **April 26** — Cortez, Colorado and Durango, Colorado;
- **April 29** — Wichita;

**For immediate release**

*more*

- **April 30** — Arkansas City and El Dorado;
- **May 10** — Janesville, Wisconsin;
- **May 11** — Mt. Pleasant, Wisconsin;
- **May 23** — Mitchell, South Dakota;
- **May 30** — Mason City, Iowa and Storm Lake, Iowa.

“A rough path can be charted from the West Coast through the Midwest and now they appear to be trekking back to the West Coast through northern states,” said ACPD Capt. Eric Burr.

“We have to assume that this group has been active every day during this three-month period of time. At more than \$2,000 for each crime, the total value of theft has to be in the range of \$100,000 or more. It seems like we are playing catchup and, on average, we are a week or more behind them.”

Prevention may be the most productive course of action, Burr said: “When shopping, keep your purse closed and utilize the child strap to anchor it into the cart. After watching several videos of how this group works, usually one of the three will approach and remove the wallet when the shopper is distracted. Stores can be crowded with people at times, but be mindful of people approaching your cart or infringing on your personal space. Do not leave your cart and purse unattended for any length of time.”

The Arkansas City Police Department cautions against confronting these suspects if they are recognized. “Be the best witness you can be and alert local authorities as soon as possible, and be prepared to give a detailed description,” Burr said.

The two male suspects look similar and police suspect they could be related. They appear to be in their 40s and may be between 5-foot-8 to 6 feet tall, each weighing between 230 and 260 pounds.

The female suspect appears to be in her late 50s or 60s and is shorter, possibly 5-foot-2 to 5-foot-6, weighing 190 to 220 pounds. The suspects may be traveling in a newer gray or silver sport utility vehicle.

Anyone with information about the identity or whereabouts of any of these suspects should immediately contact the Arkansas City Police Department at [\(620\) 441-4444](tel:6204414444).

Those wishing to remain anonymous also may contact Cowley County Crime Stoppers, which offers rewards of up to \$2,500 for information leading to an arrest.

Call [\(620\) 442-7777](tel:6204427777) in Arkansas City or [\(620\) 221-7777](tel:6202217777) in Winfield, or visit [www.tipsubmit.com](http://www.tipsubmit.com) or [accs.crimestoppersweb.com](http://accs.crimestoppersweb.com) to make an anonymous report.

An anonymous tip also can be submitted by texting ACTIPS to 847411.

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