



Rick Staly, Sheriff

FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

"An honor to serve, a duty to protect."

NEWS RELEASE

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FCSO Arrests Career Shoplifter on Theft, Narcotics Charges

BUNNELL, Fla. — The Flagler County Sheriff's Office has arrested a career shoplifter, despite his attempts to trick deputies by concealing his identity.

On June 25, deputies responded to a shoplifting in progress at Target in Palm Coast. According to the store's asset protection team, a white male wearing a hat, gray polo shirt, jeans, and black and white sneakers stole multiple pieces of clothing from the store. The suspect then walked past a store employee who attempted to stop him, but he fled on foot toward the nearby Dollar Tree.

When deputies arrived, they located a person behind Dollar Tree mostly matching the suspect's description — a white male wearing jeans and black and white sneakers, but with a blue t-shirt and no hat. Deputies interviewed the male, identified as Joseph Watson, 44, of New Smyrna Beach, Florida, who told them he was behind the store waiting for a ride and [had seen a male in a gray polo shirt run into the woods.](#)

At the same time, other deputies interviewed Target's asset protection team and reviewed the surveillance video, which showed the suspect taking the clothing items off their hangers and concealing them in his pants.

Despite Watson's clothing swap, deputies identified him as the suspect in the surveillance video. Watson then admitted to deputies that he changed his shirt, removed his hat, and hid them in the nearby woods. Deputies located the discarded shirt and hat in the woods and found the stolen clothing in Watson's backpack.

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While searching Watson, deputies found a metal container with narcotic residue that tested positive for fentanyl as well as two metal straws and burnt foil.

A review of Watson's criminal history revealed five previous arrests for petit theft in Volusia and Seminole counties, all of which resulted in convictions.

Deputies arrested Watson for petit theft — third or subsequent conviction; possession of fentanyl; possession of drug paraphernalia; and violation of probation. Under Florida law, the petit theft charge was upgraded to a felony due to Watson's prior convictions.



Joseph Watson (Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility mugshot)

“This guy has been caught stealing so many times, but for some reason he thought he could get away with it in Flagler County. Of course, he quickly learned he couldn't,” said Sheriff Rick Staly. “He even thought he could outsmart our deputies by changing his outfit and lying to them. That didn't fool them, of course, and now this guy is in the Green Roof Inn facing felony charges.”

Watson was transported to the Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility, where he is being held on a \$16,000 bond.

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