



Rick Staly, Sheriff
FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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

NEWS RELEASE

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Sheriff Staly Returns Stolen Money to Scam Victims

Marks the First Time FCSO's Cyber Crimes Unit Seizes Cryptocurrency

BUNNELL, Fla. — On July 2, Sheriff Rick Staly personally presented checks to two local victims of cryptocurrency scams. This marked the first time in the history of the Flagler County Sheriff's Office that funds sent in scams involving cryptocurrency were traced, seized, and returned to their rightful owner during a criminal investigation by FCSO's Cyber Crimes Unit.

The seizures and return of funds are the result of two separate investigations led by Detective First Class John Hill of the FCSO Cyber Crimes Unit, lasting approximately six and seven months, respectively.

In December 2024, a victim reported that she had been the victim of fraud. As part of the fraud, an unknown suspect persuaded her to transfer money from a bitcoin account through the mobile payment application CashApp.

During the investigation, cyber crimes detectives tracked a portion of the funds totaling \$612.71 to a Coinbase wallet. In April, detectives executed a search warrant and seized the fraudulent funds.

In January, another victim reported a separate fraud incident. This victim reported that as part of the fraud, she received an email claiming to be from PayPal that she owed money and provided a contact number for her to follow up. During the call, the suspect gained access to her computer and, after claiming a refund error, persuaded the victim to go to a gas station and transfer \$4,000 in bitcoin through a kiosk.

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During the investigation, cyber crimes detectives tracked the funds to an LBank Exchange wallet associated with an individual from India. In May, detectives executed a search warrant and seized the funds.

In each case, Circuit Judge Dawn Nichols authorized the seized funds to be released back to their rightful owners. Sheriff Staly presented both victims with checks: \$612.71 to the first victim and \$4,000 to the second victim.

“Cryptocurrency scams are becoming very popular by criminals, and it is notoriously difficult to get that money back,” said Sheriff Staly. “This is one of the reasons we created the Cyber Crimes Unit and purchased the sophisticated financial software for the unit to use. Tracing, seizing, and returning the money stolen during these scams is a significant achievement by our Cyber Crimes Unit and especially Detective First Class Hill.”

These investigations are ongoing, and no suspects have been arrested in either case.

“I urge all residents to educate themselves on cryptocurrency scams and other scams that criminals use to prey on our community,” Sheriff Staly added. “Pay close attention to signs of a potential scam and be wary of giving personal information or sending money to anyone who you have not met in person.”

To learn more about cryptocurrency scams, including how to avoid and report them, visit consumer.ftc.gov/articles/what-know-about-cryptocurrency-and-scams.

The FCSO Community Engagement Unit offers presentations on frauds and scams. To learn more, email CommunityEngagement@flaglersheriff.com.

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