



Rick Staly, Sheriff
FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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

NEWS RELEASE

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FCSO Helps Local Business Owner Recover Over \$144K Stolen in Fraud Scheme

BUNNELL, Fla. — The Flagler County Sheriff's Office has completed a two-month investigation into fraud committed against a local business owner, with detectives helping to recover over \$144,000 that had been stolen from the victim.

On Oct. 23, the owner of a local Dunkin Donuts franchise reported an incident to the FCSO District 2 Office in Palm Coast involving a fraudulent contractor. The victim reported that he had recently completed a remodel of a restaurant and had sent final payment based on instructions he believed were sent by the contractor; however, the contractor later contacted him stating that they had never received any payment.

The victim then discovered an email they received with the payment instructions was fraudulent. After getting a legitimate email with the final invoice from the contractor — which they received through a third-party payment software commonly used by builders — the victim then received a follow-up email from an email address closely mimicking the original. The fraudulent email had instructions for a wire transfer, which the victim had previously planned with the contractor; however, the bank account information was changed to a fraudulent account.

After sending the payment based on the instructions in the fraudulent email, the victim reported they had suffered a loss of \$166,564.18.

Detectives in the General Assignment Unit began investigating the case. During their investigation,

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detectives obtained information on the fraudulent bank account from Truist Bank and identified that \$144,506.08 was still in the account. The bank then froze the remaining funds during the investigation.

On Dec. 11, detectives obtained a search warrant to recover the stolen funds. Truist Bank then returned the funds to the victim and closed the fraudulent account.

“Thanks to this business owner quickly reporting the fraud and the great work of our General Assignment Unit detectives, we were able to recover and return the majority of the money that had been stolen by this scammer pretending to be their contractor,” said Sheriff Rick Staly.

Sheriff Staly and FCSO remind residents to stay vigilant and exercise caution to avoid becoming the victim of scams and frauds. When sending money online, always pay close attention to email addresses and look for warning signs such as bad grammar or spelling errors. Anyone who believes they are a victim of fraud should contact law enforcement as soon as possible. Flagler County residents can report scams and frauds by calling 386-313-4911 or filing a report in person at the Flagler County Sheriff’s Operations Center in Bunnell or the District 2 Office in Palm Coast.

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