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Counterfeit Cash: A Continuing Retail Crime Problem

Trumbull Police have investigated numerous incidents of criminals attempting to pass counterfeit cash in recent months, although merchants are often not aware of the crime. On Monday, February 18, two suspects passed six (6) counterfeit \$100 bills at the HomeGoods store on Hawley Lane and escaped with a large quantity of merchandise. Another recent incident occurred earlier this month when employees of the Old Navy store in the Westfield Trumbull Mall reported that a customer tried to make a purchase using phony bills. Police located and arrested the man, 21-year-old Angel Fernandez of Corona, NY, and found several counterfeit \$100 bills on him.

Over the last year, Trumbull officers have responded to at least a dozen cases where fake bills were passed or attempted to be used to make purchases. The most frequent location in town is the Westfield Trumbull shopping mall, by far the largest retail location in the area. Although only a small number of arrests have been made, the losses include thousands of dollars in merchandise, plus a few thousand dollars of the phony cash that has been recovered.

Of the four counterfeiting arrests that were made last year, two were residents of New York City, one from the Bronx and one from Queens. This has become routine in the last several years, where it has been common to find the counterfeiters traveling from New York to pass the bad cash where they believe they may not attract attention in the large shopping mall.

The twelve (12) counterfeit cases that occurred at the mall in 2018 are a small number of theft cases that police have handled there: about three-hundred-fifty (350) in total for 2018, which include shopliftings, thefts, and frauds. Nevertheless, counterfeiting is a serious matter, with each case reported to the U.S. Secret Service, which investigates those types of crimes.

On the State level, the Forgery charge is a felony regardless of the type of bill or amount of merchandise that is involved. Merchants should be aware of the security features found on all the newer denominations of paper currency, and they should always contact local police if they suspect that they have received a counterfeit bill.

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