

# State on the Look-Out for Gas Pump Skimmers

Boston, Mass. (February 10, 2016) – It's a crime that's on the rise around the country, and now it has made its way to Massachusetts. The Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation's Division of Standards is conducting random inspections of gas station fuel pumps as they're increasingly being targeted by thieves using skimmers to steal credit and debit card information.

In addition to the inspections, a letter was sent in December to more than fifty gas dispenser servicing companies seeking their cooperation in reporting to local law enforcement and the Division of Standards any skimming devices they discover either affixed to a gas pump or installed within the pump's upper chamber. In just two weeks, gas pump skimmer discoveries were made in Hingham, Westwood and Bridgewater.

Skimmers are small electronic devices that either collect or transmit via Bluetooth® technology credit and debit card data to thieves, who then either sell or use the financial information to engage in identity theft and fraud. Thieves typically access the inside of fuel pumps to install skimmers using universal keys which are available for purchase online. All 2,600 service station owners and operators in the Commonwealth have been reminded recently to regularly check their fuel pumps for evidence of tampering and skimming devices.

"Consumers who routinely use plastic at the pumps need to be wary of the increasing frequency with which skimmers are being found," said Consumer Affairs Undersecretary John Chapman. "If you see something that doesn't look right at the pump or notice a broken security seal, notify the attendant immediately and consider paying for your gas inside the service station."

The Division of Standards memo to gas dispenser servicing companies and service station owners calls on them to follow specific procedures if a skimming device is discovered.

- Take a photograph of the device, but don't touch it as forensic evidence may be recoverable by law enforcement.
- Immediately contact local law enforcement and either the local weights and measures officials or the Division of Standards.
- Tell the station owner/operator to take the gas dispenser out of service until the police have removed the device.

"We all have a vested interest in eliminating this problem to the greatest extent that we can," said Charles H. Carroll, Director of the Division of Standards. "Service station owners, operators and dispenser repair companies all have an ethical and legal obligation to notify local law enforcement and weights and measures officials as soon as a skimmer is found. Failure to do so could be subject to legal action."

Consumers should take the following steps to minimize their risk of being a victim of skimming identity theft and fraud:

- Pay with cash or credit/debit cards inside the service station.
- If you must use plastic at the pump, use your credit card. This will limit your liability to \$50, protect your PIN number, and prevent a thief from having direct access to your bank account.
- Inspect the card reader and gas pump for broken security seals and any evidence of tampering or forced entry. If identified, notify the station attendant and contact local law enforcement.
- Use gas pumps that are closest to the service station attendant.
- Monitor your bank and credit card accounts regularly. Notify your bank or card issuer immediately if you spot withdrawals or charges that you never made.

- If your financial information has been stolen, file a police report, a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission, and contact the three major credit reporting agencies (Experian, Equifax and Trans Union) to ensure no credit applications have been made in your name.

The Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation is committed to protecting consumers through consumer advocacy and education, and also works to ensure that the businesses its agencies regulate treat all Massachusetts consumers fairly. Follow the office at its [blog](#), on [Facebook](#), and on Twitter [@Mass Consumer](#).

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