Search is on for contractors in million dollar ID theft case

Tuesday, April 28, 2015

The Caddo Sheriff's Office obtained arrest warrants for 10 suspects involved in a million dollar identity theft scheme involving out-of-state cable contractors, said Caddo Sheriff Steve Prator.

The suspects are wanted for using the personal information of at least 1,200 people - some more than once - to open fraudulent cable accounts in Caddo Parish. All of the suspects were contractors for RMH Cable in Austin, Texas, which was hired by Comcast to find new customers in the Shreveport area. While working locally, the contractors identified residents who agreed to have cable service installed using others' information so the contractors could collect a commission.

Warrants were obtained for: Michael Jones, 39, Charles Smith, 41, and Ronald Gardet, 28, all of Baltimore, MD; Willie James Jones, 42, of Atlanta, GA; Georgiana Janta Wright, 21, of New York City, NY; Prince J. Riley, 32, of New Orleans; Otha Lee Johnson Jr., 33, of Pasadena, MD; Marcus Roshun Johnson, 33, of East Texas; and Herman James Frazier, 33, and Michael Dewayne Gillenwater, 32, no address known.

Michael Jones and Willie Jones, who detectives say organized the scheme, each face 107 counts of identity theft and one count of criminal conspiracy. The others face one count each of identity theft and criminal conspiracy.

One other suspect, Valerie Nicole Nichols, 33, of Pleasant View, TN, also faces 107 counts identity theft and one count of criminal conspiracy. Nichols, a former Comcast employee, was arrested on a Caddo warrant earlier in the investigation after it was determined she provided the Joneses with the personal identifying information of Comcast customers that was used to open the accounts. Nichols is currently in the Caddo Correctional Center.

Prator said the Caddo-Shreveport Financial Crimes Task Force began receiving complaints of identity theft in April 2013. Most of the complaints were from non-Caddo Parish residents who had received collection notices on overdue accounts they didn't know existed. Over the months that followed, the cases were investigated and assigned to a single detective, Bobby Herring, who began working closely with Comcast in Tennessee in March 2014 to identify the suspects responsible for setting up the accounts.

It was learned that RMH contractors worked as direct sales representatives in Shreveport in 2013 and 2014. During this time, RMH supervisors Michael Jones and Willie Jones established a relationship with Nichols, who worked at a Comcast call center in Tennessee, and paid her for personal information from customer accounts. That information was used by the contractors to open 3,630 fraudulent Comcast accounts in Caddo Parish.

The financial loss in commissions, equipment, and services to Comcast, RMH Cable, and the victims was well over $1.2 million, Prator said. The contracted employees benefitted by receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars in fraudulent commission payments. The average commission paid was $300 per new account.

Prator said the Caddo Sheriff's Office is working with the U.S. Marshal's Task Force and other law enforcement agencies to help track down the wanted suspects.

Mugshots in order: Gillenwater, Smith, Nichols, Willie Jones, Gardet, Otha Johnson, Riley, Michael Jones, Frazier, Marcus Johnson, Wright

Attachments





















