

MEDIA RELEASE

Plumber Scams Elderly Woman of Over \$17K, Additional Victims Sought

February 4, 2019

On January 10, 2019, detectives with the Washington County Sheriff's Office Property Crimes Unit began investigating suspected financial elder abuse of an 88-year-old Beaverton woman. The report was received through the Department of Human Services' statewide abuse reporting hotline from a local credit union.

During their investigation, detectives learned that in early December 2018 the woman hired a local plumbing company to complete repairs at her residence. While finishing the job, employee Cris Brackens suggested additional repairs to be done and asked to work for the woman under the table with the promise that it would save her money.

Mr. Brackens originally instructed the woman to write him personal checks for labor and materials. He later convinced the woman to provide him with her debit card in order to buy additional materials.



In late December, Mr. Bracken made 24 transactions using the woman's debit card totaling over \$13,000. He would purchase low cost items and withdraw the maximum cash back. He also made direct withdrawals from ATMs. In addition, detectives later learned he had cashed nine personal checks from the woman totaling over \$4,500.

On January 31, detectives arrested Mr. Brackens, 60, of Tigard, for aggravated identify theft, aggravated first-degree theft, first-degree theft by deception, and 24 counts of fraudulent use of a credit card. He admitted to never completing any of the plumbing work and using the money he took for personal use.

Based on information learned during the investigation, detectives are concerned there are additional victims. Mr. Brackens was involved in a statewide plumbing scam in 2010 and is believed to have had access to elderly clients. Anyone with information is asked to contact Washington County Sheriff's Office detectives by calling (503) 846-2700.

Information on protecting elders from abuse and exploitation, the warning signs, and how to report abuse can found at the Oregon Department of Human Services [website](#).



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