



## Ukiah Police Department

Safety, Professionalism, Community Service

**Chris Dewey**

Chief of Police

### **Press Release: ID theft / Violation of probation arrest UPD case # 16-2121**

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On July 21<sup>st</sup> at about 9:28 am, a UPD officer was dispatched to the Mendocino County Farm Supply on Talmage Road, regarding a possible fraud. The officer learned from an employee, that a male subject had entered the store to return store items that had been purchased on an account. The male subject, who was later identified as Merrill Walrath age 32, presented himself as the Farm Supply account holder and requested a cash refund. The employee happened to know the account holder, which was not Walrath and asked for identification. Walrath told the employee that his identification was inside his vehicle, exited the store and drove away. The alert employee was able to get a description of the vehicle that Walrath was driving, along with the vehicle's license plate number. The employee also provided the evidence to the officer of prior fraudulent transactions that Walrath had made on the account, totaling over \$450.00.

During this investigation, UPD dispatch advised the officer that a female adult in the 700 block of East Perkins Street was reporting that she let a male subject test drive her vehicle and he had not returned it. The female told the officer that the male had left his white 4Runner and provided the license plate, which matched the one from the recent fraud. The officer responded and contacted the adult female, who told the officers that the male had since contacted her and was headed back with her vehicle. Walrath arrived and officers spoke with him about the incidents. Walrath was placed under arrest for unauthorized use of personal identification and violation of his probation. Walrath was booked into county jail.

I would like to take this time to provide some ways to help prevent identity theft:

- *Keep all documents with personal information secure.*
- *Be aware of what personal information you put on social media sites!*
- *Shred documents before trashing.*
- *Always protect your passwords and PINs.*
- *Don't give any personal information to strangers.*
- *Watch your bank and credit card accounts.*
- *Check your credit score once a year.*
- *Call the police if you believe you're a victim of fraud.*

For more helpful information you can visit the UPD's web site at [www.ukiahpolice.com](http://www.ukiahpolice.com), and click on the Crime Prevention Flyers tab.

As always, our mission at UPD is simple: to make Ukiah as safe as possible. If you would like to know more about crime in your neighborhood, you can sign up for telephone, cell phone and email notifications by clicking the Nixle button on our website: [www.ukiahpolice.com](http://www.ukiahpolice.com).