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OFFICE OF THE
ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General James Uthmeier Announces Arrests and Charges for Multi-County, Multi-State Organized Retail Theft Ring



Courtesy of the Office of the Attorney General

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier’s Office of Statewide Prosecution, in an operation led by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement, charged seven defendants for their involvement in a multilevel criminal enterprise centered on stealing smoke detectors from The Home Depot.

“This operation is the result of a great partnership between Florida’s Ag Law and our Office of Statewide Prosecution,” said **Attorney General James Uthmeier**. “We are proud that Florida doesn’t have stores with merchandise locked behind glass like you see in California, and we intend to keep it that way.”

“Today’s announcement shows Florida means business when it comes to organized retail theft. Our Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement — working with local and state partners — led a months-long investigation that dismantled a major criminal enterprise stealing hundreds of

thousands of dollars of products from Home Depot stores across our state," said **Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson**. "While too many states are weakening their laws and turning a blind eye to retail theft, Florida is strengthening its laws and holding criminals accountable. If you steal from Florida businesses and citizens, expect to be caught and prosecuted."

"At The Home Depot, combating organized retail crime is about protecting the safety of our customers, associates, and communities," said **Scott Glenn, vice president of asset protection for The Home Depot**. "We're grateful for the leadership and willingness of Attorney General Uthmeier and Florida lawmakers to stop these criminals, and we remain committed to working with law enforcement and policymakers to address this growing issue."

"The Florida Retail Federation is grateful for the leadership of Attorney General James Uthmeier, Commissioner Wilton Simpson, and our law enforcement partners in combating organized retail crime," said **Lorena Holley, vice president and general counsel of the Florida Retail Federation**. "This cross-agency collaboration not only brings criminals to justice, but also protects Florida businesses, retail team members and consumers, reinforcing our state's reputation as the nation's law-and-order state."

Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement Investigators uncovered at least 44 smoke detector thefts at The Home Depot locations across 17 Florida counties. The Home Depot estimates total losses from this organized theft ring are more than \$800,000. Law enforcement recovered \$78,000 in stolen merchandise during the execution of a search warrant at a storage unit in Hillsborough County. This location is believed to be one of the stops along the trafficking route, before ultimately ending up at a large Houston, Texas, warehouse.

According to Agricultural Law Enforcement, an estimated \$300,000 worth of product was located at the Texas facility during a search warrant execution by the Houston Police. These defendants share a combined total of over 170 prior charges between them.

The thefts were committed at The Home Depot locations in Pasco, Polk, Highlands, Hillsborough, Pinellas, Orange, St. Lucie, Brevard, Lee, Manatee, Flagler, Sarasota, Seminole, Duval, St. Johns, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach counties.

The following suspects are facing felony charges of Conspiracy to Commit Racketeering, Organized Retail Theft, and Dealing in Stolen Property:

- Willie Hendry Delmarta Marquis Harvin
- Earl Choyce Gordon II
- Charles McCloud Jr.
- Eduardo Franco Viruet
- Dwight Rachard Mosby
- Eugene Rohala Oneal
- Hermis Brayan Martinez Sierra

Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Ben Grueschow and Chief Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Paul Dontenville will handle the case.

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