



Wednesday, August 25, 2021

## County Prosecutor Michael O'Malley Issues Public Warning as Three Dirt Bike Thefts This Past Weekend Underscores Problem in Cleveland

CLEVELAND – Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael C. O'Malley issued a warning to the public today as three separate thefts of dirt bikes were committed in Cleveland last weekend.

"These three thefts represent just a fraction of at least 90 incidents we have noticed over the last 18 months," said Prosecutor O'Malley. "The individuals behind this are likely contributors to the larger scale problem of these vehicles taking over our community's streets. If these thieves are not stopped, we run the risk of someone getting hurt or even killed."

On August 21, 2021, the male victim, 27, traveled from Michigan to sell his dirt bike after the suspect responded to his ad on Facebook Marketplace. The two met at Groton Park near Malden Road in Cleveland when the suspect asked the victim to take the vehicle for a test ride. The victim agreed after the suspect handed him an envelope with what the suspect indicated was money totaling the purchase price. The suspect took off on the bike and never returned. The envelope contained counterfeit money and the victim filed a police report with the Cleveland Division of Police (CPD).

On August 22, 2021, two male victims, 18 and 22 years old, both traveled from Pennsylvania, in separate incidents four hours apart from one another, to sell their dirt bikes after a suspect responded to their ads on Facebook Marketplace. In both incidents, the victims met the suspect at a location near East 97th Street and Lamont Avenue in Cleveland when the suspect asked the victims to take the vehicle for a test ride. In one incident, the victim agreed and the suspect drove off but never returned. In the other incident, the suspect gave the victim an envelope of counterfeit cash before driving off. Both victims filed police reports with CPD.

The Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office's Crime Strategies Unit noticed a similar pattern of crimes that have occurred primarily in Cleveland's 3rd and 5th Districts over the last 18 months. Approximately 90 similar incidents were found based on police reports dating back to February 2020. Victims ranged in age from 16 to 56 years old – some of whom traveled from Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts. Of those 90 incidents, an estimated:

- 83 transactions were initiated on Facebook Marketplace
- Seven transactions were initiated on OfferUp, Craigslist, or another platform
- 41 victims traveled from outside of Cuyahoga County (33 of which came from outside the state)
- 69 dirt bikes were stolen
- 21 ATVs were stolen
- 26 incidents involved suspects using counterfeit money
- Four incidents involved suspects using firearms

"Several people being victimized live outside of our county and are unfamiliar with what is going on. I urge everyone to use good judgment and avoid traveling to Cleveland to sell these types of vehicles," said Prosecutor O'Malley. "Conduct the transaction at a suburban police department or go to [safetradespots.com](https://www.safetradespots.com) to find other options."

These cases are under investigation. If you have any tips or other information, please report them to your local police department.

Visit our [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) pages to see Prosecutor O'Malley's entire message from today's press conference.