



# EL SEGUNDO POLICE DEPARTMENT

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MITCH TAVERA, CHIEF OF POLICE

## Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**June 24, 2010**

### **Pre-Paid Debit Card Arrests**

On June 23, 2010 at approximately 2:46 pm, El Segundo Officers responded to “Best Buy” on Sepulveda Blvd. regarding the attempted fraudulent use of pre-paid debit cards by two female subjects from San Bernardino. The officer’s field investigation led to their arrest and the recovery of additional evidence. Shortly after booking these subjects into jail, dispatch advised patrol officers that two other subjects were in “Best Buy” attempting to use fraudulent pre-paid debit cards to purchase high-end electronic items. Prior to the officer’s arrival, the subjects fled in their vehicle in an unknown direction. Officers tirelessly scoured City streets and eventually caught up to the suspects and their vehicle in Culver City. A field investigation led to their arrest and the recovery of additional evidence. While concluding this investigation, “Best Buy” security called again and advised a third set of subjects were in the location attempting to purchase electronics with other fraudulent pre-paid debit cards. Officers, who were still on scene gathering statements from the previous arrest, walked into the store and contacted two additional subjects. Their investigation led to the arrest of a women and the detention of her juvenile daughter.

Within a three-hour period, 5 subjects were arrested, each group unrelated to the other, and all attempted to use the same brand of “Vanilla” pre-paid Mastercards, which are available at many retail and convenience stores. A subsequent investigation revealed a glitch in the debit card system, which allowed patrons to run limitless charges on these pre-paid cards for almost a week. This information spread by word of mouth and via the internet, which resulted in fraudulent charges across California and in several other states. The “Vanilla” debit card system was eventually shut down when bank representatives identified the problem.

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