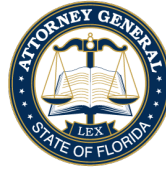


Feb 19, 2024

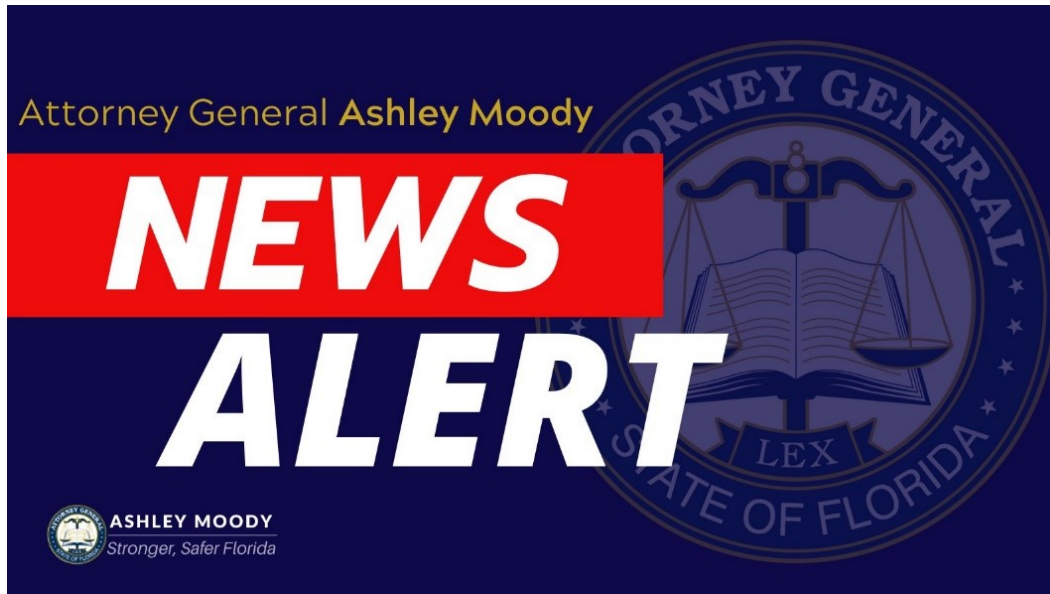
Contact Kylie Mason

Phone (850) 245-0150



Attorney General Ashley Moody News Release

Attorney General Moody Files Criminal Charges Against Three Thieves Operating Retail Theft Ring Stealing More Than \$100,000



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody’s Office of Statewide Prosecution filed criminal charges against three thieves for operating an organized retail theft ring stealing more than \$100,000 from Home Depot stores. According to the investigation, Vicky Popat, Christopher Abad and Christopher Eduardo Baglin worked together to switch barcodes on expensive roof sealers for less-expensive items. In a three-year period, the group stole 281 buckets of Henry 887 Tropi-Cool roof sealer in more than 25 theft incidents from Home Depot stores throughout 11 counties in South and Central Florida.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “This group switched barcodes at self-checkout stations on expensive roof sealers for items that cost 95-97% less, and hit multiple Home Depot stores a day—ultimately stealing more than \$100,000. Florida is a law-and-order state, and we are dismantling organized retail theft rings. Now, this group faces our Statewide Prosecutors and time in prison, where I can promise there is no self-checkout line.”

Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson said, “I’m proud of our Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement for helping to end a 3-year-long organized crime spree. While some progressive states may look the other way or pursue reduced charges for retail theft, this operation sends a clear message that Florida is relentless in our pursuit of justice and will not

tolerate this criminal activity. I appreciate the investigators and law enforcement personnel who worked tirelessly on this case, as well as our partners at the Attorney General's Office of Statewide Prosecution and The Home Depot for their cooperation and valuable assistance. Together, we will continue to pursue a safer and more secure Florida for all its residents and visitors."

According to the investigation, Popat, Abad and Baglin worked together in a fraudulent barcode-switching scheme targeting Home Depot stores in 11 counties. The group switched the barcodes on Henry 887 Tropi-Cool roof sealant, costing \$248-\$445, and Henry 345 Pre-Mixed Floor Patch, costing \$9.98, at self-checkout stations in the stores. The group typically stole from two to three stores per day, barcode switching four to 16 buckets per transaction.

Attorney General Moody's OSP charged Popat with one count of grand theft over \$100,000. Abad and Baglin are each charged with one count of grand theft over \$20,000. All members of the group are charged with one count of scheme to defraud over \$20,000.

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement handled the investigation. Attorney General Moody's OSP will prosecute the case.

#