



**Warren C. Evans**  
**Sheriff**

# News Release

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## Sheriff warns local motorists of aggressive new breed of gas thieves

### ◆ *“Bump-and-pump” fuel bandits commandeer gas nozzle from paying customers*

Wayne County Sheriff Warren Evans is warning the public about what appears to be a frightening new tactic being used by thieves who target gas station customers while they are pumping fuel into their car.

Here is how the scam works: An individual, usually a well-dressed male, approaches someone at a gas pump, often a female, and offers to pump her gas while she sits in her warm vehicle. Once he has control of the gas nozzle, the man refuses to hang it back up, which keeps the pump active. He then orders the woman to pull her vehicle away from the pump. If she doesn't a second vehicle, driven by an accomplice, pulls up and begins ramming the back of the victim's car. When the victim finally does pull away from the pump, the thieves then begin fueling their vehicle at the victim's expense.

“With the cost of gasoline continually rising, a poor economy and cold weather now here, I am concerned that this is a perfect storm that will lead to an increase in this type of crime,” Evans said. “It is important for the public to know this threat exists so everyone can take necessary precautions.”

Evans said that this “bump-and-pump” approach to fuel theft may gain popularity because targeting paying customers is often the only avenue left for a gas thief. Most local gas stations no longer allow a person to pump gas without first paying cash or securing the purchase with a credit or debit card, to avoid costly “drive offs.”

Evans said his office became aware of the phenomenon when an email message was forwarded to someone on his staff describing an incident that occurred in broad daylight at a station near downtown Detroit on November 19th.

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Against her better judgment, the woman agreed to let the well-dressed – and very insistent man – who approached her pump her gas for her. When her tank was full, however, the man would not hang up the nozzle on the pump to end the transaction.

The woman began asking him to hang up the nozzle, but he refused and began shouting at her to move her car. When she refused, a vehicle pulled in behind her and began ramming her car. To avoid severe damage to her car, she did pull away from the pump, only to see the occupants of the second car now pumping gas being paid for with her card into their car.

By the time the woman ran inside the gas station and got the attendant to shut down the pump, the crooks had made off with \$30 worth of gas at the victim's expense.

"We verified that the incident took place and understand that the Detroit Police are investigating," Evans said. "However, this is something that can occur anywhere, so people need to be aware this is happening."

Evans offered the following tips for local motorists to avoid becoming a victim of this new breed of fuel bandits:

- **Stay visible.** Don't select a pump at which you are hidden from view to employees or other customers. Select a pump that is as close as possible to the cashier and is clearly visible to employees and customers inside.
- **Pay inside.** When you pay with a card at the pump itself, the pump will remain active until you hang it up to end the transaction. If you pay inside with a card, you can tell the cashier to authorize the pump for a set amount, say thirty dollars. This way, even if someone does try to scam you while you are fueling up, the pump will stop at that amount. Also, if the thieves see you paying at the pump with a card, they will know you are a prime target for the bump-and-pump scam. When you pay inside, a crook waiting outside doesn't know if you have paid with a card, or a set amount with cash, and likely will look for another target.
- **Know how you will react.** If you are approached and feel uncomfortable, be forceful when you say "no." If the person persists, shout at them to get away and begin honking your horn or press the red 'panic' button on your car remote.
- **Don't fight, be observant.** If you become a victim of a similar attack, don't let things escalate to a physical altercation. The person may be armed and it's not worth risking your life over. Instead, try to get the license plate number of the suspect vehicle, as well as a physical description of the suspects, and have the attendant call 911 immediately.