

Media Release

Yavapai County Sheriff's Office

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October 21, 2015 - Recent Incidents Overview –

UTV involved Fatality / ID Theft Suspect Arrested after Ripping off Elderly Victim

UTV/Side by Side vehicle fatality – (Note – this is the second UTV fatality in as many weeks)

On October 18, 2015, at approximately 5PM, YCSO was notified that 44-year-old Ryuji “Michael” Numata from Avondale was missing. Numata had been driving off-road in the UTV with a group of similar vehicles in a remote area east of I17 off of Dugas Road, Yavapai County. At one point, he drove ahead of the group until and out of sight. He could not be found and more than 4 hours passed before YCSO was contacted. Forest Patrol deputies called out the Yavapai County Search and Rescue Team’s (YCSRT) 4x4 and Quad units who deployed around 7:30PM to search for Numata. A DPS Ranger Helicopter was also requested for an air search, but unable to fly due to weather conditions.

The ground crews were not able to locate Numata during their search that night. Cell phone contact was unsuccessful and attempts to track his phone did not provide worthwhile information. Just after 8AM the next day, October 19, DPS Ranger was able to conduct an air search after the weather had cleared. Just before 10 AM, the Ranger crew located an apparent UTV crash on the side of steep ravine in very heavy brush. The crew was able to land in the area and hike to the scene where they discovered Numata’s body pinned under his UTV.

Members of the YCSRT Backcountry and 4x4 Units assisted the DPS Ranger Crew who airlifted the body from the crash site to a landing zone for ground transportation to the Medical Examiner’s office.

Initial reports indicate Numata was wearing his lap belt but not the full upper body harness available for UTV users. The cause of the crash remains under investigation.

Burglar/ID Theft Suspect Arrested after extensive follow-up by deputy – On October 19, 2015, 37-year-old Nathan Lee of Prescott was arrested for charges including Burglary, Identity Theft, Forgery, and 7 counts of Aggravated Identity Theft. He remains in the Camp Verde Detention Center on a \$2500 bond.

During the months of August and September 2015, suspect Lee worked as a landscaper and handyman for a 79-year-old Chino Valley resident/victim. On



Lee

September 5, 2015, the victim's bank notified him of several possible fraudulent transactions on his debit card. When the victim checked his wallet, he discovered the debit card missing.

The deputy met with the victim at his home bank branch to review a current account statement. The victim highlighted over \$1000 in fraudulent purchases including 2 debit card transactions at ATM's in Chino Valley, purchases at WalMart in Prescott Valley and Prescott, a ranch supply store in Prescott and a sporting goods in Prescott Valley. He explained that the only person who had access to his wallet was Lee. The victim also admitted providing Lee his debit card pin number in the past when Lee was helping him gas up his car.

Over the next few weeks, the deputy followed-up at the various businesses noted on the victim's bank statement and obtained numerous video surveillance clips showing a man resembling Lee using the stolen debit card. On October 19, the investigating deputy located Lee at his Prescott home. Lee was interviewed and admitted to the theft and use of the victim's debit card without permission. He was arrested and booked at the Camp Verde Detention Center.

Citizens can contact the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office with information or questions at 928-771-3260 or the YCSO website:
www.ycsoaz.gov