**DA Launches PSA on ID Theft**

**Ahead of**

**Busy Shopping Season**

*Credit card skimming expected to increase during the holidays*

District Attorney Devon Anderson released a new public service announcement video today featuring information on credit card skimming rings. In the video, Assistant District Attorney Ed McClees joins DA Anderson to warn that identity thieves will be looking for victimsthis holiday season and offering tips on what to do to avoid becoming a victim.

“Crime prevention is a priority for the District Attorney’s Office, and an informed community can protect themselves from becoming crime victims,” said District Attorney Anderson.  “We know the holidays are a fun time, but thieves will try to steal that joy. We hope to raise awareness of their criminal activities through this PSA.”

The PSA is postedon the [Harris County District Attorney’s Office website](http://app.dao.hctx.net/Default.aspx) and describes how Identity thieves use a device known as a credit card skimmer. The device captures the information contained within the magnetic strip on credit cards and debit cards.  The skimmer can vary in size and shape, but identity thieves typically use relatively small devices that easily fit in the pocket of the thief.

“Often times an identity thief will recruit a waiter, bartender, or other individual who has legitimate access to consumer’s credit cards.  The thief will pay the accomplice to skim customers’ credit cards with this device, and will have the accomplice return the device to the identity thief,” said McClees, Assistant District Attorney and chief of the Organized Crime Section.  “The thief creates counterfeit credit cards with the customers’ information, and either uses those cards, sells those cards, or recruits other crooks to use the cards to fraudulently purchase merchandise.”

To avoid becoming a victim of credit card skimming, the District Attorney’s Office offered these tips:

* Use cash whenever possible.  Not only is cash a way to make purchases without accruing credit card interest, but it is also the safest way to pay for restaurant and bar tabs.  Cash cannot be skimmed.
* Never give your credit card number, social security number or any other identifying information in response to an unsolicited email or telephone call.
* Constantly check your credit card statement.  All major credit card companies offer the ability to check credit card statements through the internet.  If you see any purchases on your credit card statement that you did not make, immediately make a police report and notify your credit card company.

The video can be linked to at: <http://www.harriscountyda.com/Article/493/PSA_-_Avoid_Becoming_a_Victim_of_Credit_Card_Skimming.aspx>