

Counterfeit bills surfacing in Kitsap County

Local News

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Silverdale, Wash. -- They've struck restaurants and shown up in espresso stands. Commercial retail stores have become victims, as has a dentist's office, a casino, a family hosting a garage sale and an Internet entrepreneur on Craig's List. Counterfeit money has appeared in Kitsap County over the past several years in certain denominations and for brief periods of time. The current spate of phony bills started to show-up around mid-May, according to compiled data. The most recent report was filed yesterday. While numerous case reports have been initiated with the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office, some containing multiple victims, it's highly likely that there are additional victims who haven't yet reported that they have been saddled with worthless money. They may not realize that they're victims. What deputies are finding this time around are \$5 bills that have been "washed" and then re-printed to appear as if they are a larger denomination, typically a \$50 bill. However, that's just a start. Some counterfeiters are proficient enough to be able to wash and re-print money in various denominations: \$10, \$20 and \$100.

The pen test commonly used by many to identify counterfeit money isn't enough, anymore, to tell that some bills are phony. Perpetrators are using real money paper which can pass the pen test. The pen can only tell if the paper is authentic or not... if the money has been washed and you have a fake \$100 bill, it's no good and you're out of money. Patrol deputies and detectives follow-up in these investigations, although leads are often sparse. In some instances counterfeiters are apprehended. Investigations are lengthy and require an extensive documentation process. Most counterfeiters move on as the fake money is passed. It's the unknowing, innocent person who becomes yet another victim when they attempt to use counterfeit money as legal tender. Cashiers, bank tellers, restaurant staff and even the weekend yard sale hostess... anyone who deals with cash should take a few seconds to look at various security features that are built into every bill. Look and Feel

This is as far as most people go, and it's good enough most of the time. U. S. bank notes are printed on special paper that's 75 percent cotton and 25 percent linen. The linen gives it an extra stiffness that's distinctive. There are red and blue fibers imbedded in the paper. Bank notes are printed with a process called "intaglio" that leaves ink on top of the paper, giving the money a distinctive texture. The printing is

very high quality, so the lines are sharp and clear, not broken, fuzzy or blobby. Color-Shifting Ink Bank notes larger than the \$5 bill use color-shifting ink to print the number showing the denomination in the lower-right-hand corner. Look at the numbers head-on, and then from an angle. For genuine notes the color will shift (copper-to-green or green-to-black). You can get this far pretty discreetly. Check the look and feel of the bill automatically as soon it is handed to you. You can confirm the color-shifting ink with a quick glance. Going further will require that you hold the note up to the light, which is basically saying that you think that you might have received counterfeit money. A lot of people hesitate

to do this, but it's the next step if you want to be sure. Watermark

All bills larger than a \$2 now have a watermark; hold the bill up to the light to see it. For the \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100 bills, the image matches the portrait. You can use the watermark to spot bills that

have been bleached and reprinted with a higher denomination. The watermark is part of the paper and is visible from the rear of the note as well.

Security Thread
All bills larger than a \$2 have a security thread running vertically through the bill. Like the watermark, you hold the bill up to the light to see it. The thread has text with the bill's denomination and an image that is unique to that denomination. The different denominations have the threads in different places, again so you can spot bills that have been bleached and reprinted with a higher denomination. The threads also glow different colors under ultraviolet light.

Genuine Bills
If a bill:

- * Looks and feels like a U. S. bank note
- * Has color-shifting ink
- * Has a watermark that matches the portrait
- * And has a security thread with text that matches the denomination

Then it's almost certainly a genuine bill. If you believe that you may be in possession of counterfeit money, please contact the law enforcement agency serving your jurisdiction, or check with your financial institution. They are willing to assist with counterfeit money detection. If you have been scammed by accepting counterfeit money in exchange for merchandise sold or services provided, please file a case report with your law enforcement agency.