



Chelan County Sheriff's Office

Brian Burnett, Sheriff

Law and Justice Bldg ★ 401 Washington Street #1 ★ Wenatchee, WA 98801
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For Immediate Release

Contact: Chief Rick Johnson

Incident #: 20C02749

Phone: 509-667-6833

Date: 03-25-2020

<http://www.co.chelan.wa.us/sheriff>

Sheriff Brian Burnett reports on March 24th, 2020 at approximately 0720 hours an employee from Selland Construction reported batteries from their heavy equipment had been stolen overnight. At the time of the theft the equipment was parked on Raven Wing Ranch Property, 5814 Colockum Rd, Malaga WA. A week prior to this theft, five heavy equipment batteries had been stolen from this same location. The first theft was not reported to CCSO and the batteries were replaced by the victim.

When the employee arrived on March 24th, they discovered nine heavy equipment batteries had been stolen overnight. The approximate value of all the batteries stolen in the past week is \$2,720. The combined weight of all the stolen batteries is approximately 1,034 pounds.

On the evening of March 24th, one of our Deputies located a classified advertisement on the Wenatchee "Buy/Sell/Trade" Facebook page. A Facebook User had posted an advertisement on March 24th for two heavy equipment batteries. The advertised batteries were the same type and model as the stolen batteries. They were described as *"Very nice batteries. In great shape. Will test as if new. Great deal on some practically new batteries."*

An Undercover Detective responded to the advertisement via Facebook Messenger. The suspect responded and advised the Detective he actually had four batteries available for sale. The suspect sent our Detective additional photographs of the batteries. In the photographs distinguishing markings matching the stolen batteries could be observed. The suspect agreed to meet with the Undercover Detective in Wenatchee to sell him four batteries.

On March 24th at approximately 2230 hours, the suspect met up with Undercover Detectives from the Columbia River Drug Task Force. The suspect sold the Detectives the four heavy equipment batteries for \$200, and advised them he had 3 more heavy equipment batteries to sell them the following day. The suspect a 28 year old male from the Malaga area was arrested without incident. The suspect was identified as Wade Hawkins. Search warrants were obtained for the vehicle he was driving and his residence.

On March 25th at approximately 0120 hours a search warrant was served on Hawkins' residence. Two batteries matching the description of the stolen batteries were located at the residence. A third battery matching the description of the stolen batteries was located in the trunk of Hawkins' vehicle when it was searched.



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In all, Selland Construction had fourteen heavy equipment batteries stolen. Seven of the batteries were recovered. Evidence showing three of the batteries were likely sold as scrap was recovered. Four of the stolen batteries remain unaccounted for at this time. Hawkins was arrested for trafficking stolen property 1st degree, possessing stolen property 2nd degree, vehicle prowling 2nd degree, and criminal trespass 2nd degree.

This was a coordinated effort from your Chelan County Sheriff's Office among numerous deputies on three different patrol squads, and the Chelan County Regional Drug Task Force. The reality is those committing theft and other serious crimes are not taking any time off during this crisis, but your deputies will continue to work to keep our valley safe and secure.

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