



Fresno County Sheriff's Department
Margaret Mims, Sheriff
News Release

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MEDIA ADVISORY: Metal Theft Investigation Yields Arrests.

Fresno County Sheriff Margaret Mims today announced the arrest of four subjects after an investigation into the theft of 1,500 lbs of heavy gauge copper wire.

On 3-27-07, investigators from the Sheriff's Agricultural Crimes Unit and the Metal Theft Task Force were alerted to the theft by staff at Heppner's Iron & Metal. They were advised that subjects were attempting to recycle a large amount of wire at their business.

Investigation revealed that the wire, owned by PGE, had apparently been stolen from spools being transported by J&C Transport. The wire had been made by the Okonite Company especially for PGE, and was worth approximately \$6,000.00.

As a result of the investigation, four subjects were eventually arrested; 46 year old Francisco Mirelez, a driver for the transport company, was arrested on Grand Theft and Possession of Stolen Property charges. Three other subjects, 46 year old Brigilio Flores, 20 year old Arthur Jess Espinoza, and 50 year old Kerry Lee Tripp were arrested on charges of Possession of Stolen Property. Tripp was also arrested on several outstanding warrants. All four subjects were from the Caruthers area.

Anyone with information on this case, or any other agriculture or metal theft related case is asked to call Sgt. Mark Bray or Detective Douglas Bolton at 898-0667, or the Fresno County Sheriff's Department at 488-3111.