

# **Massachusetts State Police motor vehicle stop leads to 15 month investigation exposing million dollar retail crime ring**

“On February 13, 2020 Trooper Joseph Hall, of the Troop C – Community Action Team, made a motor vehicle stop in Leominster which resulted in one of the vehicle’s occupants being arrested for outstanding warrants. The vehicle’s remaining occupants were sent on their way and the individual with warrants was transported to the Leominster Barracks for booking. A short time later, a ‘Be On Look Out’ notice was issued for the very same vehicle regarding a shoplifting incident at the Home Depot in Leominster.

The vehicle was located and occupied by the boyfriend of the previous party placed under arrest. The boyfriend had five outstanding warrants and was placed under arrest. Investigation revealed that the boyfriend had traveled to the Home Depot and stolen cordless drill batteries which were exchanged at “Adopt A Video” in Leominster for bail money for his girlfriend.



*Massachusetts State Police photo.*

This traffic stop by Trooper Hall lead him to begin an investigation into the “Adopt A Video” store. With assistance from Massachusetts Crime Analyst Carol Fitzgerald, a Task Force was formed in conjunction with Leominster Police Detectives Richard Shea, and John Bouchard as well as area retail stores’ Loss Prevention Officers. From February to August 2020, the Task Force identified numerous “boosters”, or persons involved in theft activity, selling stolen items to “Adopt A Video”. Many of the “boosters” had existing warrants and were arrested by police. After arrest, many of these individuals provided statements to Leominster and State Police broadening the scope of the investigation.

Following the statements made to Police, undercover operations were made selling items to “Adopt A Video” under the pretenses that the items had been stolen from local retailers. The items were bought, and then resold (later to be recovered by the Organized Retail Crime Division) on the internet by the owner and proprietor of “Adopt A Video”, JOHN DUPLEASE, 66, of Lancaster. The undercover sales spurred an extensive investigation into DUPLEASE and his online sales utilizing popular internet marketplaces. Over the course of the investigation, 26 “boosters” were identified as contributors to DUPLEASE’s criminal enterprise.

The investigation concluded Saturday May 8th, 2021 when search warrants were executed on "Adopt A Video" and DUPLEASE's home in Lancaster. DUPLEASE was placed under arrest, as well as an employee of "Adopt A Video." A total of 1,695 stolen items were seized at "Adopt A Video" in Leominster, and 4,609 items were recovered from the Lancaster residence. Four vehicles, a Tesla; Jeep; Chevy Camaro; and Chevy Silverado, as well as 27 firearms, were seized from DUPLEASE's residence.



*Massachusetts State Police photo.*

Additionally, a "Ten Point" crossbow confirmed to be stolen from Cabela's in Berlin, and \$15,000 in cash were secured within the residence. It is estimated that between \$200,000 and \$300,000 of stolen merchandise was recovered. Within the past three years, DUPLEASE has profited over \$1,000,000 from the sale of stolen merchandise.

The operation was a joint effort between State, Local, and private agencies, consisting of hundreds of hours of surveillance. Credit for a successful outcome is due to the Leominster Police Criminal Investigation Bureau; Massachusetts State Police Troop C Community Action Team, Gang Unit, Cyber

Crime Unit, and Crime Scene Services; New England State Police Information Unit (NESPIN), Target ORC Special Investigation Unit, Lowe's ORC Investigation Unit, Wal-Mart Crimes Against Business (C.A.B.), and Home Depot ORC Investigations.

DUPLEASE was charged with the following:

1. Aggravated Organized Retail Crime over \$10,000;
2. Leader of an Organized Retail Crime Ring;
3. Receiving Stolen Property Over \$1,200; and
4. Improper Storage of a Firearm.