

CALIFORNIA LOTTERY®

NEWS

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LOTTERY THEFT SUSPECT ARRESTED

CERES, CA – A 37-year-old Ceres man was arrested today by both local and state detectives in connection with a series of burglaries involving the theft of California Lottery tickets. Officials say the thefts occurred from Madera to Modesto and account for thousands of dollars worth of Lottery tickets and reimbursements to the businesses they were stolen from.

Matthew Roberts was arrested today in Ceres after a task force comprised of state and local detectives located him at a house in the 2500 block of 5th Street. Several other people at the house were also arrested on a variety of charges including parole and drug violations.

Officials believe Roberts is a key suspect in more than 30 burglaries and thefts that occurred throughout the Central Valley from late November, 2007 to June, 2008. In each of the burglaries the suspect stole Lottery tickets. The incidents occurred in Modesto, Turlock, Ceres, Delhi, Waterford and Madera.

Investigators with the California Lottery's Law Enforcement Division began to see a pattern in the thefts that were occurring. The investigators began to coordinate efforts between local law enforcement agencies and formed a taskforce in early December, 2007. Detectives from the Modesto Police Department, Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department, Turlock Police Department, Ceres Police Department, California State Parole and the Stanislaus County Probation Department began working together on the cases. Over the following months, the taskforce conducted surveillance, searches, interviews and reviewed investigative reports.

In May 2008, Lottery investigators were notified by employees at a Save Mart in Ceres that a subject was trying to cash stolen Lottery tickets. The employees provided the detectives with a license plate number of the suspect vehicle. After further investigation detectives were able to identify Roberts as a main suspect in the thefts.

"The Lottery will not tolerate those who deceive our players and attack the integrity of Lottery games," said California Lottery Director Joan Borucki. "This task force, comprised of Lottery law enforcement and local public safety, should be commended for their efforts to stop these criminals."

Today, detectives with the taskforce went to the 2000 block of Venus Street in Ceres to locate and arrest Roberts. Robert's ex-wife and four children were at the house. Detectives located several stolen Lottery tickets in the house. The detectives developed information that Roberts was at a house in the 2500 block of 5th Street in Ceres and went to the house. They located Roberts hiding behind a chair in the house and he was arrested.

Roberts has been booked in the Stanislaus County jail for three counts of burglary and an auto theft warrant from Tuolumne County. Detectives say the investigation is continuing and expect additional charges will be filled in coming weeks as well as additional arrests.

For information about this news release contact Modesto Police Sergeant Craig Gundlach at (209) 652-3184 or Al Lundeen of the California Lottery at (916) 322-7160.

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