



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Press Release

DA Morrissey says gym thefts good reminders about leaving valuables unattended in cars

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A Mattapan man pled guilty in Norfolk Superior Court last week to breaking into cars parked outside health clubs in Needham, Stoughton and Dedham in May 2010 to steal wallets left inside by gym goers, said Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey.

Roderick Johnson, age 45, admitted to breaking into three cars at three clubs in the span of four days, according to the District Attorney.

District Attorney Morrissey added that the case should be a good reminder and a caution to those who leave valuables in their unattended cars while they work out or enjoy the outdoors in summer weather.

"It is tempting to think that it is fine to lock your wallet in your car for a short time, particularly in a well-traveled area in broad daylight, while you enjoy the beach, work out at a gym or use an outdoor recreation area," Morrissey said. "But those are areas that criminals think of as target rich environments."

"He pled guilty to all of the charges: Three counts of breaking and entering, three counts of Grand Larceny, three counts of Identification Fraud for using the credit cards he had stolen and one count of Misuse of a Credit Card," Morrissey said. Assistant Norfolk District Attorney Matthew McDonough recommended a term of 2 to 3 years in State Prison; Judge Paul Chernoff ordered him incarcerated for 18 months in the house of correction.

Johnson smashed the rear passenger window of a woman who left her purse in the back seat of her car outside a health club on Providence Highway in Dedham on May 12 between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. and stole a debit card, \$40 in cash and a cell phone, then went to use the card at a gas station and best buy store in Dedham. He was captured on surveillance video at the Best Buy at about 6:50 p.m.. His first purchase was successful, but the card was rejected when he tried to make an additional purchase.

Needham Police received a report of Johnson's next theft less than two hours later, when a woman, who had also left her purse in her car when she went in to the Gold's Gym in Needham to work out, called to say that her rear window had been smashed while she was in the gym. Police subsequently obtained additional surveillance footage of the thief, who would later be identified as Johnson, making a purchase at a Staples office supply store at 8:09 p.m. – just 79 minutes after the filmed transaction at the Best Buy.

The third theft occurred on May 15 outside the Planet Fitness on Washington Street in Stoughton at roughly 3 p.m. – again with a smashed car window and a missing pocket book. Stoughton Police subsequently obtained surveillance video from a gas station where a stolen credit card from that theft was used.

"Stoughton Detective Sgt. Robert Welch posted that surveillance footage on the Mass Most Wanted website and sent a broadcast to area police departments, which led to contact with detectives in Needham and Dedham and also led to information that the pictured thief was Mr. Johnson," District Attorney Morrissey said. "The investigation obviously moved quickly from there, with a warranted search of Johnson's residence and car. This is a good example of inter-agency cooperation solving these crimes, and also putting together a strong case."

Any and all defendants mentioned are legally innocent until proven guilty.