



Fresno County Sheriff's Office

John Zanoni, Sheriff

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News Release

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Ag Crime Detectives Arrest Peach Thieves

Sheriff's detectives assigned to the Agricultural Crimes Task Force have arrested 54 year old Francisco Lopez of Reedley and 46 year old Josue Vargas of Orange Cove for felony grand theft of farm crops. Lopez has a bail set at \$10,000. Vargas, who faces additional charges related to D.U.I. warrants, has a total bail of \$50,000.

On Monday, detectives developed information about a suspect's vehicle tied to ongoing stone fruit thefts in Fresno and Tulare Counties. Detectives worked with patrol deputies and Reedley Police officers to find the vehicle. Later that night, a deputy stopped a matching pickup truck towing a trailer at Kamm Ave. and Road 56 near Dinuba. The trailer was loaded with crates containing approximately 2,000 lbs. of Pink Moon Peaches, valued at \$8,500. Detectives responded and determined the peaches were stolen on Sunday from a farm in Tulare County. Lopez and Sanchez were placed under arrest. An additional passenger of the truck, 56 year old Jesus Chacon of Reedley, was also arrested for outstanding warrants related to drug possession and battery.

The Tulare County Sheriff's Office will be pursuing additional criminal charges against Lopez and Vargas due to the theft occurring within its jurisdiction.

Anyone with further information on this case or a related case is asked to contact Sheriff's Detective North at (559) 600-8150 or email agcrimes@fresnosheriff.org or contact Crime Stoppers at (559) 498-7867, www.valleycrimestoppers.org You will remain anonymous and may receive a cash reward. Reference case # 26-7616.

The Ag Crimes Task force encourages growers to follow these tips to protect themselves against theft.

Increase Visibility

- **Install cameras overlooking entrances, loading areas and packing facilities.**
- **Use trail cameras in remote orchards.**
- **Ensure entrances and loading areas are well lit.**
- **Trim vegetation around gates and roads to eliminate hiding spots**

Harvest Management

- **Harvest ripe fruit as soon as practical.**
- **Avoid leaving harvested bins in fields overnight.**
- **Schedule picking crews so fruit spends the least amount of time unattended.**
- **Keep loaded trailers in secured yards whenever possible.**

Secure Fruit Bins

- **Mark bins with permanent farm identifiers.**
- **Record the number of bins left in each block.**
- **Conduct daily inventory counts during harvest.**
- **Store empty bins in secured compounds.**

Clearly Mark Equipment

- **Clearly mark all equipment and fruit bins with your farm name or unique identifier.**
- **Record serial numbers and photograph valuable equipment.**
- **Use permanent, tamper-resistant markings whenever possible.**