

Montana Tavern Times

Forged/Altered Ticket Vouchers – January 1, 2014

By Angela Nunn

Operations Bureau Chief, Gambling Control Division

Hamilton man accused of forging casino payout tickets (THE MISSOULIAN, MARCH, 2012)

...A Hamilton man who reportedly used a Corrections Department ID while trying to cash fake casino tickets faces felony forgery and theft charges in Missoula County.

...Video surveillance showed a small group of people involved in the alleged scheme, which paid out more than \$3,000, Marks' affidavit said.

...“Forensic analysis of the computer showed that casino tickets had been scanned in and there were programs on the computer capable of altering them,” it said. (http://missoulian.com/news/state-and-regional/hamilton-man-accused-of-forging-casino-payout-tickets/article_c55aa7c4-6cc9-11e1-86b3-0019bb2963f4.html)

Billings woman charged with altering gambling machine vouchers

(BILLINGS GAZETTE, SEPTEMBER, 2013)

...A Billings woman accused of altering gambling machine ticket vouchers was charged with a felony crime Friday in Yellowstone County District Court.

...According to court records, the case began on July 4 a few minutes before 2 a.m. when someone printed out a ticket voucher for 5 cents from a video gambling machine.

...The next day, at about 5:50 p.m.,...tried to redeem an altered ticket voucher for \$500 at the same casino, court records state.

...The altered voucher had the same validation number as the voucher printed the day before for five cents, and a casino employee refused to pay. (http://billingsgazette.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/billings-woman-charged-with-altering-gambling-machine-vouchers/article_5f1f0361-f223-5526-8356-151507190e35.html?print=true&cid=print)

We have all read or heard about these or similar situations in the news. Over the past year, the Gambling Investigation Bureau has either investigated or worked with local law enforcement agencies on at least a dozen cases around the state where people have tried to alter winning gambling machine ticket vouchers in order to, well, let's call it what it is....STEAL from gambling establishments. Coincidentally, within the past month alone, our office has opened up several new investigations concerning altered ticket vouchers from around the state. Whether the slight uptick is due to the holiday season or not, we don't know; but while we are working diligently to help solve these types of

cases, we have found that in most circumstances, there are ways to help deter these criminals from being successful.

Here are a couple examples of what we are seeing when it comes to forged/altered vouchers.

1. Taking a winning ticket voucher for a small amount such as .05 cents and altering it by gluing new numbers and letters that are typed out with the same or similar font over the existing ticket and increasing the payout to a larger amount such as \$300, \$500 or \$800.
2. Using discarded watermarked VGM paper and scanning, altering, then printing out a fake ticket voucher on their home computer/printer.
3. Cashing the forged ticket vouchers when staff is very busy and distracted with other customers, or cashing the tickets at another chain-related location.

While it's easy to say slow down and inspect every ticket closely, we know that when establishments are hopping with business, the time to pay proper attention isn't always available. However, here are a few tips we would like to offer to help curb this kind of theft.

1. Establish a business process that requires when a ticket voucher reaches a certain dollar amount (say \$300 or higher), bar employees are required to follow a more rigorous verification process, such as checking the voucher against the audit roll in the machine and tracking it by the ticket number and/or validation number.
2. Hold the ticket up to a light to look for appropriate watermarks or irregularities in the paper around the printed dollar amounts.
3. Ask the person which VGM they won it on and then compare the VG MID number on the ticket to the number on the machine they pointed out.
4. Pay close attention to the dates and times on the ticket, looking for any discrepancies.
5. If possible, use ticket voucher paper with visible or invisible watermarks on it, holograms, or bar codes if you have a bar code scanner.
6. Discard un-used VGM paper by shredding or by placing it in a garbage receptacle that is inaccessible to the public.
7. Ask your machine distributor or route operator for what types of technology they have access to for reducing the opportunities for fraud.
8. Make sure the ticket voucher displays all the required voucher fields:
 - (a) the name of the licensed establishment;
 - (b) the name of the city, town, or county in which the licensed establishment is located;
 - (c) the machine serial number;
 - (d) the video gambling machine identification number (VG MID) assigned to the machine;
 - (e) the time of day in hours and minutes in a 24-hour format. The clock must automatically account for daylight savings time and indicate "S" for standard

- time and "D" for daylight savings time;
- (f) the current date;
- (g) the program name and revision;
- (h) the value of the prize in numbers;
- (i) the value of the prize in words;
- (j) the sequential number of the ticket voucher;
- (k) this notice clearly displayed on the ticket: "Ticket Void After 48 hours."

7. Keep your video equipment in good working order, as it helps aid law enforcement in identifying suspects.
8. If an altered ticket is cashed, reduce the handling of it to just the edges and place it in a paper envelope for law enforcement. Tape the envelope shut.
9. If the cashier is very busy, contact a second employee to handle the inspection of the ticket and cashing out if deemed valid.

Showing diligence in verifying ticket vouchers will hopefully send a message to would-be criminals that you are paying attention and that there is a good chance of being caught.