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# PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

## **Bad Cat Uses Hot Dog to Commit Insurance Fraud** *"Insurance fraud doesn't pay"*

The Arizona Department of Insurance Fraud Unit and the Mesa Police arrested two suspects accused of staging a slip-and-fall accident for insurance money.

Authorities charged the suspects, identified as Lesa Bonilla (39) and Tommy Masterson (50), of Phoenix with insurance fraud and booked them at the Maricopa County Jail on December 7, 2009.

Slip-and-fall scams generally involve two people; one enters the business and sets up the scam; the second, then enters and 'slips' on the slick surface. Generally, the scams involve liquid on the floor, in some cases, they loosen pipes in a bathroom causing water to spill onto the floor, or they simply spray or spill liquid on the floor. In this case, however, the suspects used a hot dog!

The store's video clearly shows Masterson and Bonilla, along with a small child, approaching the store on foot from different directions and Masterson's prominent tattoo of a cat on his left forearm is visible in the store video. Masterson and the child entered the store, bought a hot dog at the snack bar, and proceeded to Women's Apparel where he met up with Bonilla. Store video then shows Masterson looking around for other shoppers, placing the hot dog on the floor and walking away. Bonilla then walks around the rack of clothes and conspicuously "slips" on the hot dog.

Phoenix Fire Department Paramedics treated Bonilla after the fall and transported her by ambulance to the Maricopa Medical Center. She then filed a bodily injury liability claim against the store, seeking a quick settlement for her alleged injuries.

Investigators believe the two suspects are room mates. Tommy Masterson is under investigation for the exact same hot dog slip-and-fall scam in other Arizona retail stores.

Unfortunately, these slip-and-fall scams are more common than the public might realize. They occur in restaurants, retail stores, grocery stores, and other businesses throughout Arizona. Insurance fraud is a felony and raises the cost of insurance for all of us. To learn more about insurance fraud, visit <http://www.id.state.az.us/fraud.html>.

Christina Urias, Insurance Director, urges businesses who suspect they have been the victim of this type of insurance fraud, to please contact the Fraud Unit at the Arizona Department of Insurance 602-364-2140.

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