

SALT LAKE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
SHERIFF ROSIE RIVERA
Celebrating 175 Years of Service



*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

**SALT LAKE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE ARRESTS FOUR SUSPECTS AND RECOVERS
\$147,000 IN STOLEN COPPER**

South Salt Lake, Sept. 13, 2024 — Yesterday, the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office recovered \$147,000 worth of stolen copper and arrested four individuals in connection with the theft.

The investigation began Sept. 6 when deputies responded to a report of a \$55,000 copper mold stolen from Rio Tinto Kennecott. Using investigative techniques, detectives identified two suspects, Hea Mahe, age 36, and Duc Bui, age 35, who were arrested Sept. 10. Additional information led detectives to obtain a search warrant for Ortiz Metal Processing in Salt Lake City.

Detectives served a warrant on Sept. 12. The search resulted in the recovery of more than 10,000 pounds of stolen copper and the arrest of a third suspect, JL Fakalata, age 35. The owner of the facility, Fabian Ortiz, age 49, was also arrested on suspicion of purchasing stolen property.

"Recovering this stolen property reflects the dedication and persistence of our detectives," said Salt Lake County Sheriff Rosie Rivera. "Their commitment to solving this case and keeping our community safe is something I'm incredibly proud of."

The Utah Attorney General's Crimes Against State Economy (CASE) Task Force assisted the Sheriff's Office during the investigation.

"This case, led by Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office and supported by AG investigators, was a highly successful one," said Attorney General Sean Reyes. "Stolen metals are particularly difficult to recover, and an operation at this level not only returns assets to the rightful owners, but also deters future theft. We are grateful to work with such dedicated partners to protect our citizens and their property."

During the search, detectives recovered the 8,600-pound copper mold, valued at \$55,000, as well as a 6,000-pound copper "button" valued at \$30,000 and multiple copper plates worth \$62,500.

"We are grateful to the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office for their diligent work in recovering our property," said Matt Tobey, General Manager, Metals, Rio Tinto Kennecott. "We are committed to the

health, safety and security of our employees and contractors. A multi-disciplinary team is investigating the incident and will take action improvement measures based on the outcome of the investigation.”

Charges in this case are being screened.

[Click here for photos of the recovered property.](#)

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