Hand-sanitizer theft led to meth bust at Mesa Community College

Julianne Logan, The Republic | azcentral.com   *9:42 p.m. MST May 7, 2014*

(Photo11: azcentral)

An investigation into the theft of a bag of hand sanitizer led to a methamphetamine bust at Mesa Community College's Red Mountain campus, according to court records.

David Joseph Auer, 43, was arrested Tuesday on suspicion of several drug related counts, including possession of a dangerous drug, records show.

Police reportedly found methamphetamine inside Auer's car after Red Mountain campus security witnessed him remove a large bag of hand sanitizer from a dispenser and put it in his backpack, according to East Mesa Justice Court records.

Auer was seen entering the campus, 2305 N. Power Road, on video surveillance by security guards shortly before 8 a.m. After the alleged theft, Auer went to a green Buick parked inside the campus's parking lot where he placed the backpack on the passenger seat, records stated.

According to records, Auer was standing next to the vehicle when he was stopped by police and campus security, who identified him based on the surveillance tape.

When police asked him about the hand sanitizer, he denied knowing anything about it and agreed to let them search his vehicle and backpack, records showed.

Police reportedly found two plastic bags of methamphetamine hidden in a pair of boots inside the vehicle, according to court records. Approximately 1.2 liters of Purell Hand Sanitizer was recovered from the backpack, along with a glass pipe believed to be used for smoking methamphetamine, police said.

The hand sanitizer, estimated to be worth $20, was returned to Red Mountain campus security guards, who indicated the college wanted to prosecute Auer for the theft.

Auer told police he is a transient that lives out of his car and stole the hand sanitizer so he would have something to clean himself with later, records show.