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Police: DNA from a Gauze Bandage Identifies Thief from a 2012 Car Burglary

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When the air bag was stolen from a car in 2012, Darien police detectives had an unusual clue: A gauze bandage was left behind, apparently after it had fallen off, and it had some dried blood on it.

The bandage proved crucial in identifying the thief, who was taken into custody Tuesday, police said.

Police detectives sent the bandage off to the state forensic lab, where the dried blood was analyzed. But it took until August 2014 for the lab to identify Jose Cruz, now 50, of Bridgeport as the bandage wearer, police said. Police applied for and received a warrant for his arrest.

Last June, Darien police were notified that Cruz was arrested in southern New Jersey on charges of being a fugitive from justice because of the Darien warrant. On Tuesday, police took him back to Darien, where he

was charged with third-degree burglary and held on a \$25,000 bond.

Darien police gave these additional details of the case (including accusations not proven in court):

Cruz has an extensive criminal history involving similar thefts, and he had been arrested previously in connection with a Darien theft: On March 9, 2011 a Toyota Rav4 was stolen from the parking lot of Hindley School. New York City police arrested Cruz and another person that day, charging Cruz with stealing the vehicle.

On Oct. 24, 2012, a 2005 Honda was found with its driver's side window smashed out and the airbag from the center of the steering wheel stolen. The car was parked in a private parking area of Thorndal Circle, a cul-de-sac where Cruz had no reason to be.

The gauze bandage was found on the hood of the car. Detectives believed it had fallen off the thief when he got out of the vehicle to deal with the alarm system.

After going through a lengthy extradition process, Darien police officers took custody of Cruz in New Jersey. If he doesn't make bail on Tuesday, he can be expected to appear Wednesday in state Superior Court in Stamford.