



What's Lurking Inside the Gas Pump?

Stopping for gas feels routine. Insert card, pump fuel, move on with your day. But gas pumps are a favorite target for criminals using credit card skimmers, small devices designed to steal card information while looking completely invisible from the outside. These skimmers are often installed inside the pump itself, where most people never think to look.

In addition to traditional skimmers, criminals are now using fake “tap-to-pay” stickers placed directly over or near real payment terminals. These stickers are designed to trick drivers into tapping their card or phone on a fake contactless reader that captures payment data. One easy way to spot these scams is to look at the tap symbol—on legitimate pumps, the contactless Wi-Fi symbol is typically lit or backlit, often in blue. If the sticker looks dull, unlit, misaligned, or simply stuck on top of the pump, it's a red flag.

Whether it's a hidden skimmer or a fake tap sticker, the goal is the same: quietly steal your card information while you're focused on getting gas. Criminals rely on routine and speed—most people don't stop to inspect a pump before paying. Slowing down for just a moment and paying attention can prevent a major headache later.

Quick Signs to Watch For at Gas Pumps

- Broken or missing security seal on the pump
- Loose parts, odd attachments, or anything that looks added on
- Card slot that feels tight, sticky, or different than usual
- Tap-to-pay sticker that looks pasted on or isn't lit up
- Pumps far from the store entrance or poorly lit

Other options

Pay inside, use pumps closest to the building, use mobile/contactless payment when available, or give the card reader on the pump a good pull, shake it to see if it comes loose. And for the “tap-to-pay” option, look for that backlit Wi-Fi symbol and then try to see if you can peel anything off of the tap area.