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NEWS

Illinois Department of Insurance

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Department of Insurance Announces Two Convictions Resulting from its Workers' Compensation Fraud Investigation

Workers' Compensation Claimant and Roofing Sub-Contractor Convicted

CHICAGO – Illinois Department of Insurance (DOI) Acting Director James E. Stephens today announced investigations by the Department's Workers' Compensation Fraud Unit have resulted in two convictions. A workers' compensation claimant facing charges in Cook County related to his claim for benefits, charged with theft and workers' compensation fraud and an employee of a family owned business charged with forgery in Cook County have both been convicted and sentenced.

"The Department takes accusations of fraud very seriously and we continue to send a clear message that workers' compensation fraud will not be tolerated in Illinois," said Acting Director James A. Stephens. "We're pleased to have worked with the Cook County State's Attorney's Office that prosecuted Mr. Dezort and with the Illinois Attorney General's Office that prosecuted Ms. Escobedo."

Roger Dezort, was sentenced to two years of probation, 180 days in jail (time considered served), ordered to submit to random drug testing, ordered to reimburse the county \$500 for the cost of his public defender, and ordered to pay \$439 in fines, fees, and costs. He pleaded guilty to felony theft on March 12, 2015. Dezort had also been charged with one additional count each of theft and workers' compensation fraud. He filed a case with the Illinois Worker's Compensation Commission for his injuries in July 2009.

Dezort misrepresented his medical condition and exaggerated his symptoms to medical treatment providers and the insurance company. He created the impression the injuries he claimed to have suffered while at work were more extensive than they really were in order to collect temporary total disability (TTD) benefits, receive unnecessary medical care, and to remain off work.

The investigation, conducted by the Department of Insurance Workers' Compensation Fraud Unit, showed that Dezort incorporated his own company three days prior to his alleged accident. Video surveillance showed Dozart engaged in similar activities he would have performed for his employer. Additional video surveillance showed he did not use any assistive devices nor displayed any obvious signs of trouble walking while performing work for his own company. During the same period, Dozert was observed using a cane and limping only when he attended medical appointments.

Rosalva Escobedo, an employee of A & E Construction, was sentenced to two years of probation. She pleaded guilty to forgery on March 9, 2015.

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Escobedo, who worked for the family-operated business, created false Certificates of Insurance by changing the dates and policy numbers on a valid certificate that had been previously issued. She then provided the fraudulent Certificates of Insurance to a roofing contractor as proof of workers' compensation insurance coverage. The contractor, who relied on the Certificates of Insurance Escobedo provided, was assessed thousands of dollars in additional premium by her own insurance company to cover the uninsured risk.

"The workers' compensation system is intended to cover costs for employees who are injured on the job. Instead, in this case, the evidence proved that the defendant schemed to defraud the program for her own financial benefit," said Attorney General Lisa Madigan.

For more information about workers' compensation fraud, including matters that may involve fraud perpetrated by a claimant, employer, or insurance agent, please visit the DOI website at <http://insurance.illinois.gov/WCFU/default.asp>. To report a claimant, employer, healthcare provider, attorney, insurance agent or company, contact the Workers' Compensation Fraud Unit at 877-WCF-UNIT (877-923-8648) or DOI.WorkCompFraud@illinois.gov.

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