



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, July 23, 2018

Crooked Contractor Sentenced to State Jail for Conning Elderly Customers



(Fort Worth) – Ernest Thibodeaux has pled guilty to Theft of an elderly victim, \$2,500 - \$30,000, and received a sentence 3 years and 8 months in state jail. He also signed an order agreeing to make restitution of \$77,000 to his victims.

Thibodeaux, a home contractor, was responsible for multiple instances of fraud in Arlington and the Monticello and Fairmont neighborhoods of Fort Worth. In at least 6 cases he received payment and then performed substandard home remodeling projects. In a recent case near Arlington's Turning Point Secondary School, he accepted a \$4,850 payment for new windows for a 72-year old resident's home, which he never produced.

Working under a series of false names, including "Kris Malachi", Thibodeaux approached homeowners offering excellent rates on projects such as building an extension onto the back of a house, and installing new wood flooring. In one of the Fort Worth cases, Thibodeaux showed up only periodically to the project, completing demolition work on the kitchen, walls and backyard deck to install an addition. He filed no permits with the city as promised, and failed to provide \$16,184 of building materials and labor. City of Fort Worth Building inspectors deemed the work "substandard and knowingly dangerous," and ultimately condemned the project.

After being contacted by homeowners, Fort Worth and Arlington police were unable to locate anyone by the name used by Thibodeaux in these schemes. FWPD Detective Kent Bickley put out a "BOLO," or Be On the Look Out, report to law enforcement for a John Doe matching Thibodeaux's description, and he was located by Dallas Police Department asleep in his car and identified as Ernest Thibodeaux.

Working together with the White Collar Crime Team of the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office, the Fort Worth and Arlington Police Department's thorough investigations were able to illustrate a clear pattern of deceptive practices by Thibodeaux against more than half a dozen victims.

"This case represents a strong investigative partnership between our office, Arlington Police Department and the Fort Worth Police Department," said prosecutor Nathan Martin. Detectives Dominic Del Biaggio (APD) and Kent Bickley (FWPD) were diligent in their collection of evidence, locating additional witnesses, and working with our office to establish Thibodeaux's pattern and criminal intent."

"Our agencies are getting better and better at learning to spot these schemes, compile strong cases against the defendants, and make sure justice is served for these victims in a timely fashion," said Criminal District Attorney Sharen Wilson. "We're sending a very clear message to white collar criminals with these cases: if you're going to try to defraud the residents of Tarrant County, we are prepared to prosecute you to the full extent of the law."

Thibodeaux made his plea in the 372nd District Court, presided over by Judge Scott Wisch. The case was prosecuted by the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office's White Collar Crime Team.

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