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# **News Release**

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## **Wisconsin man sentenced for bank fraud, conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine**

A 38-year-old man from New Richmond, Wisc., was sentenced today in federal court on charges of bank fraud and conspiracy to distribute the highly dangerous and addictive drug methamphetamine.

On March 26 in St. Paul, United States District Court Judge Donovan Frank sentenced Christopher Dwight Bierbrauer to 96 months in prison and five years of supervised release on two counts of bank fraud, one count of theft of mail and one count of conspiracy to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute 500 or more grams of methamphetamine. Bierbrauer was indicted on the methamphetamine charge on Feb. 5, 2008, and indicted on the bank fraud charges on Dec. 4, 2007. He pleaded guilty to the charges on April 24, 2008.

According to Bierbrauer's plea agreements, he knowingly executed and attempted to execute a scheme to defraud a financial institution and to obtain money from that institution by means of false and fraudulent pretenses. The purpose of the alleged scheme was to obtain fraudulently more than \$30,000 by presenting and cashing forged and falsified checks at financial institutions and fraudulently using accounts.

Bierbrauer admitted that he fraudulently appropriated the identities of others without their knowledge or consent by manufacturing false identifications, fraudulent checks in their names and fraudulently using bank accounts in their names. Bierbrauer also used the false identifications and fraudulently-opened accounts to cash fraudulent checks at financial institutions, and obtained cash by making "split deposits," in which he would receive some cash back.

The plea agreement specifically cites two occurrences when Bierbrauer used the names of two different men to cash fraudulent checks for \$15,006 at one bank on Nov. 30, 2005, and for \$6,000 at a different bank on Feb. 1, 2006. On Dec. 29, 2005, Bierbrauer unlawfully possessed a Dish Network bill and check payment which had been stolen from a Woodbury resident's mail.

Bierbrauer's second plea agreement states that from 2006 through March 20, 2007, he knowingly and intentionally conspired with others to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute 500 or more grams of methamphetamine. Bierbrauer obtained more than 1.5 kilograms of the drug from various suppliers in Minnesota and elsewhere and distributed it for profit.

A second defendant in connection with the conspiracy, Kelly Marie Jacob, 36, New Richmond, Wisc., was also sentenced today to 36 months in prison and four years of supervised release on one count of conspiracy. She pleaded guilty on April 10.

The bank fraud case was the result of an investigation by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the conspiracy case was the result of an investigation by the Duluth Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The conspiracy case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas M. Hollenhorst and the bank fraud case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael A. Dees.