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# **News Release**

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## **3 more child pornography charges added to Eagan man's indictment**

Three additional child pornography charges were added this week by a federal grand jury to an indictment against a 50-year-old Eagan man.

Joel Leslie Wells, who was previously indicted on one count of possession of child pornography and one count of receipt of child pornography, was charged Oct. 6 in Minneapolis with three new counts of receipt of child pornography.

The superseding indictment against Wells alleges that on Dec. 30, 2004, he knowingly and intentionally possessed in an electronic format at least 500 images of minors engaging in sexually explicit conduct. It also alleges that Wells maintained the images on his computer, and from August 2004 through September 2004, Wells allegedly received images of minors engaging in sexually explicit conduct via the Internet.

The indictment alleges that Wells did knowingly receive visual depictions involving the use of a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct on Aug. 14, Aug. 21, on Aug. 24 and on Sept. 10, 2004.

If convicted, Wells faces a potential maximum penalty of 10 years in prison on the possession count and 40 years on each receipt count. The case against Wells is scheduled to go to trial on Nov. 17 before United States District Court Judge Donovan Frank.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Eagan Police Department and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney William J. Otteson.

This case is part of Project Safe Childhood (PSC), a national initiative that encourages the use of multi-jurisdictional task forces to investigate and prosecute cases that involve the sexual exploitation of children over the Internet. PSC urges that law enforcement efforts be complemented by community-wide campaigns to assist victims of exploitation and to educate

parents, other adults, and children about Internet safety.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, one in 33 children receives an unwanted sexual solicitation online each year. One in four children experiences unwanted exposure to sexually explicit material on the Internet each year. And, more than 20,000 images of child pornography are posted on the Internet every week. Moreover, recent research conducted by the Federal Bureau of Prisons indicates a strong correlation between possessing or distributing child pornography and committing sexual-contact crimes against children.

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An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by a defendant. A defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.