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# **News Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2008

## **Woodbury woman pleads guilty to mail fraud**

A 40-year-old Woodbury woman pleaded guilty today in federal court in connection with stealing merchandise from retailers and selling the stolen items on the Internet.

Christine Anne Pierre pleaded guilty to one count of mail fraud Oct. 15 in St. Paul. Pierre, who entered her plea before United States District Court Judge Richard Kyle, was charged on Sept. 25.

According to Pierre's plea agreement, she admitted that from September 2006 through September 2007 she stole numerous items of merchandise from a number of retail stores located throughout Minnesota. Pierre also admitted that she maintained an e-Bay auction store and sold the stolen items to customers representing them to be her own.

Pierre admitting stealing more than \$70,000 worth of merchandise, which she shipped to her customers via U.S. Mail.

According to a U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) affidavit, authorities began investigating Pierre in September 2006 after being notified by the Archiver's Photo Memory store, who said Pierre might be involved in stealing merchandise from their stores.

Investigators visited Pierre's e-Bay site, and noticed several items similar to the items missing from Archiver's were listed for sale or auction. According to Archiver's customer database, Pierre made several purchases at several stores. However, Pierre's e-Bay site featured items that Pierre did not purchase, according to the database. On Oct. 6, 2007, Pierre mailed three 8-inch wooden letters that were stolen from an Archiver's store.

Police executed a search warrant at Pierre's residence on Aug. 22, 2007, and officers recovered approximately \$10,000 worth of stolen merchandise. Police also notified e-Bay of Pierre's fraudulent activities, and e-Bay deactivated her account.

Officers learned that on Sept. 5, 2007, Pierre's e-Bay site had been reactivated, and that items reported stolen from Archiver's were advertised for sale on the site.

Police executed a second search warrant at Pierre's residence on Sept. 6, 2007, and seized additional stolen merchandise.

Pierre faces a potential maximum penalty of 20 years in prison. Judge Kyle will determine her sentence at a future date. This case is the result of an investigation by the USPIS and the Woodbury Police Department, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas M. Hollenhorst.