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News Release

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Grove City man indicted for stealing more than \$86,000 in Social Security benefits

A 65-year-old man from the central Minnesota community of Grove City was indicted today in federal court in Minneapolis for allegedly obtaining more than \$86,000 in Social Security disability benefits fraudulently. Ralph Egmund Harald Frisch was charged with one count of concealment from the Social Security Administration ("SSA") and one count of making a false statement to the Social Security Administration.

The indictment alleges that from September of 2002 through the current date, Frisch concealed and failed to disclose to the SSA his true physical condition and capabilities, his employment, and his ability to engage in work. Specifically, on September 30, 2002, Frisch filed a claim for disability benefits. The claim was denied; however, Frisch requested a hearing. At his January 28, 2004, hearing, he testified that he was disabled due to an ankle injury. He alleged that he needed a cane to walk on even surfaces and a walker to walk on uneven surfaces. Based on that testimony, on May 18, 2004, an administrative law judge found him disabled, and he began receiving approximately \$1,400 per month in benefits.

Shortly thereafter, investigators obtained evidence that Frisch allegedly had been doing painting and roofing jobs between May and September of 2003, during which time he was seeking disability benefits. Then, in October of 2004, a private investigator allegedly observed Frisch roofing a home in Minneapolis. Frisch was observed for several days working on the house, specifically, going up and down a ladder, using an electric saw and pitchfork, and installing new shingles. At no time was Frisch observed using a cane or a walker, and Frisch displayed no sign of injury. The SSA-Office of Inspector General ("SSA-OIG") began an investigation and interviewed Frisch on February 1, 2008. During that interview, Frisch alleged that he had worked for a temp service from 2004 through 2006, doing a variety of jobs, including shoveling snow, making pizzas, and setting up tables. He also reportedly said he did roofing work, although not on a regular basis. Frisch's benefits were terminated on October 17, 2008.

If convicted of this crime, Frisch faces a potential maximum penalty of five years in prison on each charge. All sentences will be determined by a federal district court judge.

This case is the result of an investigation by the SSA-OIG. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Kevin S. Ueland.

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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.