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News Release

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Grove City man pleads guilty to stealing more than \$86,000 in Social Security benefits

Earlier today in federal court in St. Paul, a 65-year-old man from the central Minnesota community of Grove City pleaded guilty to obtaining more than \$86,000 in social security disability benefits fraudulently. Ralph Egmund Harald Frisch pleaded guilty to one count of concealment from the Social Security Administration ("SSA"). Frisch, who was indicted on February 24, 2011, entered his plea before United States District Court Judge Donovan W. Frank.

In his plea agreement, Frisch admitted that on September 30, 2002, he concealed and failed to disclose to the SSA his true physical condition and capabilities, his employment, and his ability to engage in work when he filed a claim for disability benefits. The claim was denied; however, Frisch requested a hearing. At his January 28, 2004, hearing, Frisch testified that he was disabled due to an ankle injury. Frisch said 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 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 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 disclosed 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.

For his crime, Frisch faces a potential maximum penalty of five years in prison. Judge Frank will determine his sentence at a future hearing, yet to be scheduled.

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

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