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News Release

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Federal jury finds convict guilty of escaping from Minnesota prison

MINNEAPOLIS – Late yesterday in federal court, a jury found a 67-year-old convict guilty of escaping from the Federal Prison Camp in Duluth. Following a two-day trial, the jury convicted James Edward Thornberg of one count of escape from federal custody. He was indicted on March 15, 2011.

According to the indictment filed in this case and the evidence presented at trial, Thornberg escaped on August 3, 2003, and evaded capture until March 2, 2010, when he was apprehended by United States Marshals in suburban Los Angeles, California. Investigators learned that Thornberg was using an alias and had been employed by a janitorial company. Thornberg was arrested when he attempted to meet with the manager of that company. During a search at the time of his arrest, authorities found a California driver's license, a debit card, and a passport under Thornberg's alias, along with other documents.

Prior to his escape, Thornberg was serving a 96-month sentence for wire fraud and money laundering after having been convicted in federal court in the District of South Dakota. His projected release date was November 11, 2008. According to testimony at trial, on August 3, 2003, Thornberg was found to be missing during a routine prisoner count and could not be located anywhere in the correctional facility.

For his crime, Thornberg faces a potential maximum penalty of five years in federal prison. United States District Court Judge Ann D. Montgomery will determine his sentence at a future hearing, yet to be scheduled. This case is the result of an investigation by the U.S. Marshals Service. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert M. Lewis.

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