



## United States Attorney William J. Ihlenfeld, II Northern District of West Virginia

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CONTACT: CHRIS ZUMPETTA-PARR  
(304) 234-0100

### **WEST VIRGINIA MAN CONVICTED OF TRAVELING TO HAVE SEX WITH MINOR FEMALE**

*Defendant admits to encounters with victim in Wetzel County hotel room*

WHEELING, WV – A West Virginia man was convicted today for traveling across state lines to have sex with a 14-year old girl whom he had met on the Internet, according to United States Attorney William J. Ihlenfeld, II.

MARK LORING DAWSON, age 52, of Charleston, West Virginia, was convicted this afternoon of the felony offense of “Travel in Interstate Commerce with the Intent to Engage in Illicit Sexual Conduct.” DAWSON admitted that he drove to Sardis, Ohio and picked up a minor female, and then transported her to a hotel in New Martinsville, West Virginia, and engaged in sexual activity with her on multiple occasions in 2012 and 2013. DAWSON acknowledged that he misrepresented his age to the victim while chatting with her on a social media website and that he claimed to be much younger than his actual age.

“Unfortunately, the Internet, and specifically social media sites, have made it easier for sexual predators to meet and groom potential victims,” said U.S. Attorney Ihlenfeld. “This case is another example of an older man who misrepresented his identity in order to gain the attention of a young girl, and then traveled a long distance in order to complete his crime.”

As a result of his conviction, DAWSON faces a penalty of up to thirty years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Pursuant to the terms of the plea agreement, DAWSON will be required to register as a sex offender upon his release from prison, and he will be under the supervision of the Court for the remainder of his lifetime. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled at a later date pending the completion of a pre-sentence investigation report. DAWSON will remain in the custody of the United States Marshal while awaiting sentencing.

The case is being prosecuted by U.S. Attorney Ihlenfeld and was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the New Martinsville (WV) Police Department.

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