



September 10, 2010

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**MADIGAN: CLINTON COUNTY MAN CHARGED WITH BURGLARY  
AND GRAIN CODE VIOLATIONS**

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed charges against the owner of a company that once operated four grain elevators in Clinton and Marion counties for numerous violations of the Illinois Grain Code and burglary.

John Kniepmann, 46, of Breese, is charged with 12 counts of violating the Grain Code and one count of burglary. Kniepmann is the owner and president of Grain Exchange, LLC and Consolidated Exchange, Inc. which operated elevators in Carlyle, Bartelso, Germantown and Sandoval. Attorney General Madigan charged that over an 11-month period in 2007 and 2008, Kniepmann knowingly engaged in activities to defraud and withhold information from the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) and an area bank.

"Many farmers have been experiencing financial hardships over the past few years. These alleged acts by Mr. Kniepmann put them in an even more precarious position," said Attorney General Madigan.

"These charges resulted from an in-depth, coordinated investigation between the Attorney General's office and the Illinois Department of Agriculture and demonstrate our commitment to prosecute those who abuse the trust of Illinois grain producers," Director Tom Jennings said.

Clinton County Circuit Court Judge Dennis Middendorff today issued a warrant for Kniepmann's arrest with bond set at \$50,000.

According to the criminal information filed today by Attorney General Madigan, between March 2007 and February 2008, Kniepmann allegedly submitted inaccurate, misleading and false reports to the IDOA regarding a series of notes payable to the First State Bank of Eldorado that are valued in excess of \$4 million. He also is accused of withholding records indicating the alleged shipment in March 2007 of approximately 10,000 bushels of wheat by using the name of his stepdaughter and another shipment of 5,000 bushels the following August.

Violations of the Illinois Grain Code are Class 2 felonies punishable by a sentence of three to seven years in the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). The burglary count, also a Class 2 felony, is based on a bank employee's statement that Kniepmann entered his vehicle while it was parked at the Carlyle elevator and allegedly removed a document belonging to the bank.

Senior Assistant Attorneys General Richard Rybak and Terry Kaid are prosecuting the case for Madigan's Criminal Prosecutions/Trials Assistance Bureau at the request of the Clinton County State's Attorney's office.

The public is reminded that these are merely charges and that the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in court.

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