



NEWS RELEASE

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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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Columbia Woman Pleads Guilty to Insurance Fraud

Columbia – A Columbia woman has pleaded guilty to insurance fraud.

On May 19, Phyllis Renea Bryant, 51, pleaded guilty to obtaining property by false pretenses. Judge Thomas W. Cooper Jr. sentenced her to 18 months suspended to two years probation and \$3,489.29 restitution to Allstate Insurance Co. Bryant agreed to pay a civil penalty in addition to her criminal guilty plea in Richland County.

Around Jan. 5, 2009, Bryant reported to police and Southern United Insurance Co. that her 1998 Jeep Cherokee had been stolen. The vehicle was later recovered; it had been burned.

Bryant signed a vehicle theft statement indicating she did not have any other insurance on the vehicle. An investigation found that she had insurance on the same vehicle with at least three other insurance companies. She had filed a claim with each of them for the theft.

The case was investigated by Ted Shealy of SLED. It was prosecuted by the S.C. Attorney General's Office.

The S.C. Attorney General's Office received about 600 complaints of insurance fraud last year, with property and casualty cases (including automobile insurance fraud) making up the highest percentage. Cases have been reported from all over the state.

To report suspected insurance fraud, call the Insurance Fraud Hotline at (888) 95-FRAUD (888-953-7283). Callers can remain anonymous.

For more information, contact the South Carolina Insurance News Service at 803-252-3455