



News Release

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL ALAN WILSON
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

For Immediate Release
March 10, 2015

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Two St. Stephen, S.C. Men Arrested In Connection with Pesticide Theft, Involuntary Manslaughter

(COLUMBIA, S.C.) Attorney General Alan Wilson announced the arrest of two St. Stephen, S.C. men in connection with a pesticide theft and involuntary manslaughter investigation.

Kenneth M. Beauford (DOB 1958) and Damon Lamonte Kelly (DOB 1974) were arrested on February 27, 2015 by agents from the South Carolina Department of Pesticide Regulation, which is the state's lead enforcement agency for the sale, use and distribution of pesticides.

Investigators say that on or about June 3, 2014, Kelly stole a restricted use herbicide known by the brand name Gramoxone. Its active ingredient is an extremely poisonous agent called paraquat. Beauford placed the weed killer in plastic soft drink bottles labelled "Pepsi." He then sold the bottles to two people in St. Stephen. One buyer mistook the herbicide for a soda and drank some. He died on June 15, 2014.

Beauford and Kelly are also accused of applying Gramoxone without a valid certified pesticide applicator's license.

Beauford is charged with one (1) count of Involuntary Manslaughter (punishable by not more than five [5] imprisonment); one (1) count of receiving stolen goods, \$2,000 or less (punishable by not more than 30 days imprisonment); and three (3) counts of Pesticide Control Act violations (punishable by not more than 30 days imprisonment on each count).

Kelly is charged with one (1) count of petty larceny, \$2,000 or less (punishable by not more than 30 days imprisonment); and three (3) counts of Pesticide Control Act violations (punishable by not more than 30 days imprisonment on each count).

The case was investigated by agents from the South Carolina Department of Pesticide Regulation. It will be prosecuted by Assistant Attorney General Ashley A. McMahan.

Attorney General Wilson stressed all defendants are presumed innocent unless and until they are proven guilty in a court of law.

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