



Department of Justice

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THREE MERRILL RESIDENTS PLEAD GUILTY TO METHAMPHETAMINE CHARGES

Madison, Wis. - John W. Vaudreuil, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced today that three individuals have pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Madison for their involvement in methamphetamine cooking operations in central Wisconsin in 2009.

This week, David Bienfang, 39, Hal D. "Casey" Mulford, 26, and Christopher Schmeltzer, 40, all of Merrill, Wis., pleaded guilty to conspiring to possess pseudoephedrine with the intent to manufacture methamphetamine from March 2009 to January 2010.

Chief U.S. District Judge William M. Conley scheduled sentencing for Bienfang on January 14, 2011; Mulford on January 20, 2011; and Schmeltzer on February 4, 2011. Bienfang, Mulford and Schmeltzer all face maximum penalties of 20 years in prison. Federal prison sentences are served without the possibility of parole.

The prosecutions of David Bienfang, Hal D. "Casey" Mulford, and Christopher Schmeltzer were the result of an extensive and ongoing investigation conducted by the Merrill Police Department, Lincoln County Sheriff's Department, and Wisconsin Department of Justice, Division of Criminal Investigation. To date, the cooperative state, local and federal investigation has resulted in the conviction of nine people involved in five separate methamphetamine cooking operations during 2009. Set forth below are the defendants who have previously been convicted and sentenced in federal court:

Name	Crime of Conviction	Sentence Imposed
Shawn Ably	conspiracy to possess pseudoephedrine with intent to manufacture methamphetamine	6 years
Jake Barttelt	manufacture of methamphetamine	5 ½ years

Name	Crime of Conviction	Sentence Imposed
Daniel Bohman	manufacture of methamphetamine	4 years
Joshua Graham	conspiracy to possess pseudoephedrine with intent to manufacture methamphetamine	10 years
Chuck Groff	conspiracy to manufacture methamphetamine	12 years
Paul Rasmussen	attempted manufacture of methamphetamine	5 years

Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert A. Anderson is handling the prosecution of these cases.

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