

PRESS RELEASE

Missouri Man Sentenced for Unemployment Insurance, Home Depot Frauds

Monday, August 21, 2023

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Missouri

ST. LOUIS – U.S. District Judge Matthew T. Schelp on Monday sentenced a man from Ste. Genevieve County to 34 months in prison for defrauding both Home Depot and Missouri's unemployment insurance program.

Arthur Grass, 36, was also ordered to repay \$207,000. Grass filed false unemployment claims for about 10 people beginning in May of 2020, claiming that the employees had been laid off from his construction company, AJE Construction. Grass cashed out the unemployment benefits, which had been placed on debit cards, and kicked some money back to the purported "workers" who had voluntarily provided him their personal information to use in the scheme. In all, the fraud reaped \$142,423, including money from supplemental COVID-19 pandemic unemployment benefits.

Grass also admitted defrauding Home Depot on multiple occasions by filling a cart with boxes of vinyl flooring and showing employees a fraudulent receipt claiming that he'd paid for the flooring online. Grass then sold the flooring on Facebook. Charging documents say he stole about 468 boxes of flooring that way from Home Depot stores in St. Louis and St. Louis County from Jan. 5, 2023 through Feb. 6, 2023.

"Arthur Grass conspired to defraud the Missouri Division of Employment Security (MODES) by filing fraudulent unemployment insurance (UI) claims which caused MODES to pay more than \$140,000 in benefits," said Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge, Great Lakes Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. "We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to safeguard the UI system from those who seek to exploit these benefit programs."

Grass was arrested on March 31, 2022 by St. Charles County police investigating catalytic converter thefts. His Jeep was in a storage lot with Grass inside. Police later

found a stolen Glock 9mm pistol in a toolbox in the Jeep. Grass is a convicted felon and barred from possessing a firearm.

Grass pleaded guilty in May to one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm, one count of conspiracy to steal money from the United States (unemployment benefits) and one count of wire fraud.

The case was investigated by the Homeland Security Investigations, the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, The U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the St. Charles County Police Department, the Missouri Department of Labor, the Arnold Police Department, the St. Louis County Police Department and Home Depot Retail Investigations. Assistant U.S. Attorney John Ware is prosecuting the case.

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