

PRESS RELEASE

Troy Man Charged With Pandemic Unemployment Insurance Fraud

Thursday, December 19, 2024

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of New York

ALBANY, NEW YORK – Daion Morris, age 32, of Troy, New York, was arraigned today on an indictment charging him with wire fraud and aggravated identity theft.

United States Attorney Carla B. Freedman; Erin Keegan, Special Agent in Charge of the Buffalo Field Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); and Lucy Lang, New York State Inspector General (NYSIG), made the announcement.

The indictment alleges that Morris used a stolen identity to create an unemployment insurance claim in September 2020, and continually recertified the claim through March 2021. Morris received over \$29,000 in unemployment insurance benefits in the victim's name. The charges in the indictment are merely accusations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Upon conviction on all counts, Morris would face at least 2 years and up to 22 years in prison; a fine of up to \$250,000; and a term of supervised release of up to 3 years. A defendant's sentence is imposed by a judge based on the particular statute the defendant is charged with violating, the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other factors.

Morris was arraigned today in Albany, before United States Magistrate Judge Daniel J. Stewart, and ordered released pending a trial before Senior United States District Judge Lawrence E. Kahn.

HSI, NYSIG, the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the New York State Department of Labor – Office of Special Investigations investigated the case, which Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan S. Reiner is prosecuting.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with

agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

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