



## U.S. Department of Justice

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### **NEWS RELEASE**

Andrew T. Baxter, Acting United States Attorney for the Northern District of New York, announced today the sentencings of John Wood, 59, Plattsburgh, NY and Curtis Collins, 51, Willsboro, NY, for illegal asbestos removal and disposal activities. Both defendants pled guilty to conspiring to violate the Clean Air Act and the mail fraud statute before United States District Judge David N. Hurd in Utica, NY. Wood further pled guilty to contempt of court based upon numerous new asbestos crimes that he committed while awaiting trial on the original charges.

In 2005-06, after being released from prison for unrelated felonies, John Wood began operating an asbestos abatement company known as J & W Construction, Inc. Wood thereafter directed his employees to perform "rip and run" asbestos removals that, rather than removing all asbestos, dispersed and left substantial quantities behind, significantly contaminating numerous businesses and homes. Some of the asbestos was buried on a farm in Willsboro, NY, which required the expenditure of "Superfund" funds to clean up.

To deceive clients into believing that all of the asbestos had been removed and that

their businesses and homes were safe to reoccupy, Wood utilized the services of Mark Desnoyers, a licensed air monitor from Plattsburgh NY. Desnoyers falsified air samples so that laboratory results appeared to prove that all asbestos had been removed from homes and businesses when in fact they remained seriously contaminated. Wood testified against Desnoyers at trial last September.

The Honorable David N. Hurd, sentenced Wood to serve four (4) years in jail and pay restitution to victims of \$854,166.06. Wood was further placed on supervised release for three years following his release from jail.

Curtis Collins worked for Wood and also ran his own asbestos abatement business. Collins also pled guilty and cooperated with the United States by testifying against Desnoyers at trial. Collins was sentenced to two (2) years in prison, followed by three (3) years of supervised release. He was ordered to pay \$114,902.89 in restitution to victims.

Desnoyers was convicted of all counts of an indictment charging him with a Clean Air Act and mail fraud conspiracy and related substantive violations. Desnoyers is scheduled to be sentenced on March 13, 2009 at 11 a.m. before Judge Hurd in Utica, NY.

Asbestos has been determined to cause lung cancer, asbestosis and mesothelioma, an invariably fatal disease. The Environmental Protection Agency has determined that there is no safe level of exposure to asbestos.

The investigation of this matter was conducted by Special Agents of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, with assistance from Inspectors with the New York State Department of Labor (Asbestos Control Bureau). The matter was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Craig A. Benedict, who can be reached at 315-448-0672.