



pennsylvania
OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL

Josh Shapiro, Attorney General

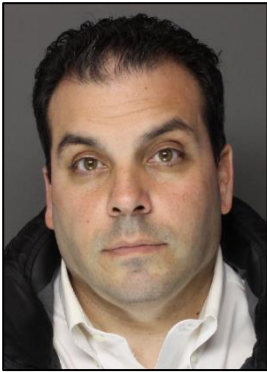
CRIMINAL LAW DIVISION

INSURANCE FRAUD SECTION

NEWSLETTER

April 2018

Insurance Broker Charged with Theft of Premium Payments



On April 25, 2018, Mark Bleier was arrested in **Washington County**. According to the criminal complaint, Bleier was a licensed insurance broker and the owner of Steel City Insurance, an agency located in Pittsburgh which sold and managed commercial insurance policies for various businesses. According to the criminal complaint, between 2014 and 2016 Bleier received, but failed to remit for payment, premium funds which were entrusted to him by some of the agency's commercial customers. The complaint further stated that in some cases, the customers believed that they were insured when in fact they had no coverage. In one such instance, a commercial customer allegedly provided nearly \$39,000.00 to Bleier as a down payment for general liability, workers' compensation, property insurance and umbrella coverage for the customer's business. According to the complaint, Bleier provided the customer with a fraudulent Certificate of Liability, purportedly confirming that the coverage was in place. The complaint further stated that after the customer's employee was involved in a serious accident while driving

a company vehicle, the customer found out that his liability coverage had been cancelled for non-payment. As a result, the customer allegedly had to prove to the insurer that he had submitted his premium payment to Bleier in a timely fashion. In all, between 2014 and 2016, Bleier allegedly misappropriated or failed to remit a total of \$93,444.59 in premium funds entrusted to him by commercial insurance customers. Bleier was charged with one count of Insurance Fraud (F3), one count of Theft by Failure to Make Required Disposition of Funds Received (F3), one count of Misapplication of Entrusted Property (F3) and one count of Tampering with Records or Identification (M1).

Former Insurance Agent Sentenced for Fraud, Theft of Commissions



On April 19, 2018, Keynan Kinard was sentenced in **Dauphin County** after entering a negotiated plea to one count of Theft by Deception (F3) and one count of Insurance Fraud (M1). While working as a licensed insurance agent during 2013 and 2014, Kinard submitted approximately 29 fraudulent life insurance policy applications to American Amicable Life, American Memorial Life and Transamerica Life insurance companies, in order to obtain advanced commission payments. Kinard illegally received a total of nearly \$8,000.00 in commissions from American Memorial and Transamerica. Kinard surrendered his producer's license to the Pennsylvania Department of Insurance in 2014, following an investigation by the Department into Kinard's actions. A subsequent criminal investigation revealed that Kinard used the personal identifying information of others without their knowledge or consent on many of the bogus life insurance applications. Kinard admitted

to investigators that he often included fictitious bank account information on applications, in order to ensure that the policies were not issued or would lapse after Kinard received his commissions. Kinard was sentenced to serve 23 months of intermediate punishment, the first 6 months of which he will serve under house arrest. He was ordered to pay nearly \$8,000.00 in restitution, pay a fine of \$50, and pay court costs.

ARRESTS

Insurance Fraud

- On April 25, 2018, Dawn Canterbury was arrested in **Philadelphia County**.

According to the criminal complaint, in June of 2016, Canterbury obtained a renter's insurance policy for her apartment from State Farm Insurance. On July 29, 2016, Canterbury allegedly filed a claim on the policy for water damage to furniture, clothing, jewelry, electronics and collectibles in her apartment. Canterbury allegedly submitted a fraudulent receipt to State Farm in the amount of \$4,601.00, purportedly for reimbursement of dry cleaning expenses. According to the complaint, State Farm paid Canterbury the \$4,601.00, but refused to pay any more on the claim after the insurer discovered inconsistencies with the receipt. Canterbury was charged with one count of Insurance Fraud (F3), one count of Forgery (F3), one count of Theft by Deception (F3) and one count of Criminal Use of a Communication Facility (F3).



- On April 16, 2018, Candis Jones was arrested in **Philadelphia County**.

According to the criminal complaint, on January 12, 2014, Jones and two alleged coconspirators staged an accident involving a U-Haul truck which Jones had rented. Jones allegedly filed a fraudulent accident claim with Repwest Insurance Company and another claim for injuries which purportedly resulted from the accident. According to the complaint, an unnamed accomplice also filed fraudulent claims with



Repwest and Safe Auto Insurance companies, for damages purportedly sustained in the accident by another vehicle. Jones and the others allegedly admitted to investigators that they had participated in the planning and execution of the scheme. Jones was charged with one count of Insurance Fraud (F3), one count of Criminal Attempt/Theft by Deception (F3), one count of Criminal Use of a Communication Facility (F3) and one count of Conspiracy (F3).

- On April 11, 2018, Breanne Rudolph was arrested in **Lancaster County**.

According to the criminal complaint, Rudolph obtained coverage for her vehicle from Progressive Insurance, then allegedly filed a claim for vehicle damage, maintaining that the hit and run accident occurred after her policy inception. However, the complaint stated that a Progressive investigator located a Lancaster Police Department accident report which indicated that Rudolph's car was damaged in a hit and run accident prior to the date on which Rudolph obtained coverage. Rudolph allegedly insisted that the damage occurred after her policy took effect, but she eventually admitted that the damage she had claimed was the damage described in the police report. Rudolph was charged with one count of Insurance Fraud (F3), one count of Criminal Attempt/Theft by Deception (F3) and one count of Insurance Fraud (M1).



- On April 25, 2018, Christine Pierce was arrested in **Erie County**. According to the criminal complaint, Pierce added comprehensive and collision coverage to her vehicle on November 3, 2017, at approximately 2:34 AM. Days later, Pierce allegedly contacted Progressive and reported that her vehicle had been in an accident on November 9, 2017. According to the complaint, Pierce claimed that the accident

occurred after her additional coverage was in place. However, Pierce's father allegedly told Progressive that the accident had occurred at approximately 12:04 AM on November 3, which was before Pierce's coverage incepted. Pierce was charged with one count of Insurance Fraud (F3) and one count of Criminal Attempt/Theft by Deception (F3).



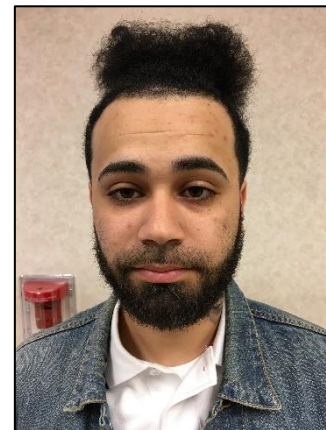
- On April 20, 2018 Shaicimah Gant was arrested in **Monroe County**. According to the criminal complaint, on March 24, 2016, Gant purchased a renter's policy from the American Banker Insurance Company, which is part of the Assurant Group. On July 7, 2016, Gant filed a claim with the Assurant Group in which she allegedly reported that electronic items, including a Phillips 40" TV, a Samsung 40" TV, Apple iPad, Apple Watch and a Dell Inspiron desktop computer, had been stolen from her apartment. The complaint stated that Gant sent photographs and screenshots of the stolen items to the insurer. However, an investigation allegedly revealed that the items were not stolen. The claim was denied by the Assurant Group. Gant was charged with one count of Insurance Fraud (F3) and one count of Criminal Attempt/Theft by Deception (F3).
- On April 30, 2018, Tara Boehme was arrested in **Allegheny County**. According to the criminal complaint, Boehme obtained vehicle coverage from Progressive Insurance on October 13, 2017. On October 17, 2017, Boehme allegedly advised Progressive that her vehicle had been damaged in an accident



which occurred earlier that day. According to the complaint, investigators found a post on Facebook which indicated that the accident had occurred approximately two weeks before Boehme obtained coverage. Boehme was charged with one count of Insurance Fraud (F3) and one count of Criminal Attempt/Theft by Deception (F3).



- On April 19, 2018, Eric Dejesus was arrested in **Dauphin County**. According to the criminal complaint, on January 28, 2016, Dejesus obtained full coverage from Progressive Insurance for his 2014 Subaru Impreza. At the time, Dejesus allegedly indicated that the vehicle had no prior damage. On the following day, Dejesus contacted Progressive and allegedly reported that the rear panel of his vehicle was damaged in an accident which had occurred on January 28. Dejesus allegedly provided the insurer with the same details during a subsequent recorded statement. According to the complaint, Dejesus provided Progressive with photos of the damage in support of his claim. Investigators allegedly determined that the accident actually occurred on January 22, 2016, nearly one week before Dejesus obtained full coverage. Dejesus was charged with one count of Insurance Fraud (F3).



CONVICTIONS



- On April 9, 2018, Malinda Taylor was sentenced in **Clinton County** after entering an

open plea to one count of Insurance Fraud (F3). On October 25, 2016, Taylor added comprehensive coverage to her Progressive insurance policy, which had an effective date of October 30. Taylor filed a claim with Progressive



Insurance on November 5, 2016, stating that while she was driving home from work that day, her car hit a deer. However, some of Taylor's co-workers told investigators that they gave Taylor a ride to work several weeks prior, when her car was damaged in an accident. The investigators determined that the crash took place before Taylor added comprehensive coverage to her policy. Taylor was sentenced to serve 3 years of intermediate punishment, the first 9 months of which she will serve under house arrest. She was also ordered to pay a civil penalty of \$100.00, pay a fine of \$500.00, and pay court costs.

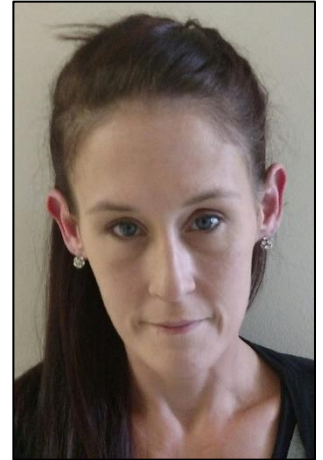
- On April 23, 2018, Joseph Hess was sentenced in **Mercer County** after entering an open plea to one count of Criminal Attempt/Theft by Deception (M1). Hess was involved in an automobile accident on January 25, 2017. He obtained coverage



for the vehicle from Safe Auto Insurance at approximately 7:31 PM that day. Hess subsequently contacted the insurer and claimed that the crash happened at 8:45 PM. However, Pennsylvania State Police records revealed that the accident was reported to PSP at 6:59 PM, before Hess's policy incepted. Hess was sentenced to serve 3 years of probation, ordered to perform 50 hours of community service, pay restitution in the amount of

\$1,000.00, pay a civil penalty in the amount of \$250.00, and pay court costs.

- On April 12, 2018, Jessica Sweeney was sentenced in **Butler County** after entering a negotiated plea to one count of Criminal Attempt/Theft by Deception (M1). Sweeney obtained a Progressive



Insurance automobile policy for her 2015 Chevrolet Cruz at 8:17 AM on June 4, 2017. Her previous Progressive policy was cancelled on May 21, 2017, for non-payment. On June 8, USAA Insurance contacted Progressive and filed an accident claim against Sweeney's policy. USAA advised Progressive that Sweeney had backed her car into a parked vehicle, which was insured by USAA. On June 9, 2017, Sweeney provided a recorded statement to Progressive in which she maintained that the accident occurred at 8:25 AM on June 4, 2017, after Sweeney had obtained coverage for her car. However, Sweeney's employer told Progressive that Sweeney called her at approximately 8:00 AM on June 4, and stated that she had been in an accident. During a subsequent interview, Sweeney admitted that she purchased coverage from Progressive after the loss occurred. Sweeney was sentenced to serve two years of probation, ordered to perform 50 hours of community service, pay a civil penalty of \$100.00, and pay court costs.

- On April 3, 2018, Christine Byers was sentenced in **Allegheny County** after entering an open plea to one count of Insurance Fraud (F3). On March 3, 2017, Byers obtained automotive coverage from Safe Auto for her 2011 Ford Fiesta. The policy was cancelled for non-payment on April 3 at 12:01 AM. At 7:14 AM on May 4, Byers contacted Safe Auto and reinstated the coverage. Byers contacted Safe Auto at 3:56 PM the following day, and lowered her collision and comprehensive deductibles from \$1,000.00 to \$500.00. On May 10, Byers contacted the insurer and filed a claim for

damage to her vehicle. Byers told the insurer that the damage occurred on May 9, when Byers was pulling into a parking lot and her vehicle struck a curb. Safe Auto subsequently inspected the vehicle and found damage to the front driver's side grill and bumper, axle, tie rods, wheel and tire. The insurer issued payment in the amount of \$2,311.87. However, Safe Auto subsequently received a tip indicating that someone else had been driving Byers' Fiesta on the day of the accident. Investigators ultimately determined that the loss occurred on May 4th, before Byers reinstated her coverage. Byers was sentenced to serve two years of probation, ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$2,311.87 to Safe Auto Insurance, and pay court costs.



- On April 16, 2018, Jennifer Troiano was sentenced in **Allegheny County** after entering an open plea to one count of Insurance Fraud (F3). On April 20, 2016, at approximately 12:45 PM, Troiano accidentally backed her car into another



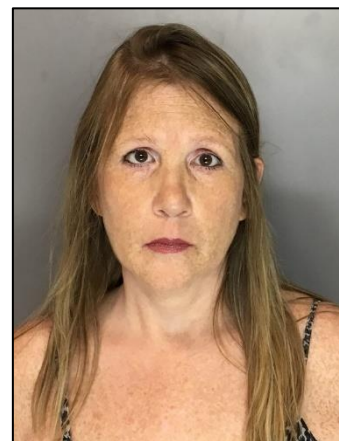
vehicle. At the time, Troiano's Progressive Insurance coverage had lapsed for non-payment. At 1:25 PM on April 20, Troiano reinstated her coverage. In so doing, Troiano told the Progressive representative that her vehicle had not been damaged and had not been involved in any recent accidents. The insurer contacted Troiano after the owner of the other vehicle filed a claim with Progressive. Troiano then claimed that the loss occurred at 2:00 PM on April 20th, after she had reinstated her coverage. However, an investigation revealed that the accident took place before

the policy was reinstated. Troiano was sentenced to serve 18 months of probation, ordered to perform 50 hours of community service, pay restitution in the amount of \$500.00, and pay court costs.

- On April 3, 2018, Saeed Anglin was sentenced in **Allegheny County** after entering a negotiated plea to one count of Theft by Deception (M1). On November 4, 2015, Anglin reported to his supervisor at the Sears Outlet Distribution Center that Anglin had badly injured his left ankle while working. ACE Insurance Company, the Workers' Compensation carrier utilized by Sears, issued payment for Anglin's medical treatment. Several days after the accident purportedly occurred, Anglin was seen holding his crutches while running to catch a bus. A coworker also reported that Anglin claimed to have faked the injury to get easier work assignments and to obtain Workers' Compensation benefits. Anglin admitted to an investigator that he had not injured his ankle and that he had exaggerated his claim. Anglin was sentenced to serve one year of probation, ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$475.01 to Sears Holding Corporation, and to pay court costs.



- On April 25, 2018, Anna Spinelli was sentenced in **Chester County** after entering a negotiated plea to one count of Insurance Fraud (F3) and one count of False Reports to Law Enforcement (M3). Spinelli contacted Grange Insurance on May 30, 2013, and claimed that her 2008 Ford Escape had been involved in an accident with three other vehicles. Spinelli said that a



"phantom" vehicle struck her Ford from behind and then fled the accident scene. She claimed that the rear impact caused her Ford to strike the car in front of her which, in turn, struck the car in front of it. However, Grange Insurance discovered that Spinelli previously filed a claim with Nationwide for damage to the Ford's rear bumper. The Grange representative compared photos from both claims and found that the damage appeared to be the same. The representative then spoke to the drivers of the other two involved vehicles. The first driver claimed that she had not seen any vehicle behind or near Spinelli's car at the time of the impact. The second driver denied seeing any vehicle leave the accident scene. Grange denied payment of the claim. On September 4, 2013, Spinelli contacted Grange and reported that her 2012 Chrysler apparently was struck by a hit and run driver while the car was parked outside a store. However, the adjuster who inspected Spinelli's car reported that the car appeared to have scraped a guard rail or a retaining wall. Spinelli withdrew her claim and admitted that the Chrysler had hit a guardrail. Spinelli was sentenced to serve one year of probation and ordered to pay court costs.

(ARD) DISPOSITIONS

During the month of April, one additional defendant received Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition (ARD).

Anti-Fraud Compliance – Reporting of Insurance Fraud to Law Enforcement Agency

Pennsylvania Bulletin Notice 2016-04 (issued April 30, 2016) reminded insurers of their obligations to report suspected arson or insurance fraud to law enforcement agencies within the Commonwealth. The bulletin also announced a decision by the Pennsylvania Department of Insurance to allow licensees to satisfy their reporting obligation when they electronically submit reports of suspected fraud to the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB).

On July 6, 2017, Pennsylvania began participating in this online service which enables member

companies to electronically forward reports of suspected fraud to the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General's Insurance Fraud Section or other appropriate law enforcement agencies at the same time the companies report suspicious claims to the NICB. *NOTE: The NICB is not a law enforcement agency. Therefore, a licensee cannot satisfy the fraud reporting requirement by submitting a non-electronic (paper) referral only to the NICB.*

Resources available on our website:

- Detailed instructions and tips for referring to law enforcement;
- Explanation of the basic elements of the offense of insurance fraud;
- Pennsylvania Insurance Fraud Statutes and information on how to obtain fraud training materials; and
- Monthly newsletter that reports on our recent arrests and convictions.

FRAUD REFERRALS

The Office of Attorney General's Insurance Fraud Section is the largest law enforcement entity in PA vested with specific authority to investigate and prosecute insurance fraud.

Most of the investigations conducted by the Insurance Fraud Section are initiated by referrals from insurance companies.

The INSURANCE INDUSTRY should use one of the following:

- [Instructions for Insurance Industry Form](#) 📄
- [INSURANCE INDUSTRY Printable Referral Form](#) 📄
- [INSURANCE INDUSTRY Online Referral Form](#)

Report suspected fraud to the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General online at: www.attorneygeneral.gov

This newsletter was produced by the PA Office of Attorney General's Insurance Fraud Section and edited by Senior Deputy Attorney General John T. Dickinson.