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### **WEATHERFORD, TEXAS, MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO SETTING SERIES OF SEMI-TRACTOR FIRES**

United States Attorney Richard B. Roper announced that Randall Ellery Orff of Weatherford, Texas, pled guilty this morning in federal court in Fort Worth, Texas, before the Honorable Charles Bleil, United States Magistrate Judge, to one count of mail fraud, one count of use of fire to commit felony and one count of destruction of a vehicle in interstate commerce. Orff, age 41, faces a maximum statutory sentence of not less than 15 years nor more than 35 years imprisonment, a \$750,000 fine, and restitution. Sentencing is set for July 12, 2005, before the Honorable Terry R. Means, United States District Judge.

Orff was employed as a long distance independent truck driver for various interstate trucking companies. He operated 18-wheel semi-tractor and trailer rigs that he owned or leased to own. He insured his tractors with various insurance companies or would obtain coverage under the insurance policy of the company hiring him.

According to documents filed in court, Orff admitted that from 1992 through mid-July 2003, he set at least 13 tractor fires, and at least one house trailer fire, and the total amount of losses caused by these fires was more than \$300,000. Usually Orff started a fire in the tractor making it appear that the fire was caused by an electrical problem. Orff then claimed to investigators and insurance companies that the fires were the result of electrical or mechanical problems or some other accidental cause. Orff burned trucks while employed with, among others, Mason Dixon Lines, Universal Am-Cam and Southwest Carriers, and either filed, or caused to be filed, claims with the insurance companies to collect damages resulting from the fires.

"It's this type of criminal activity that has such a negative impact on everybody's insurance rates," stated Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Special Agent in Charge Ronnie Carter. "This long term cooperative investigation was certainly worth the effort," Carter added.

U.S. Attorney Roper praised the investigative efforts of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Weatherford, Texas, Fire Marshal, the Weatherford, Texas, Fire Department and the Weatherford, Texas, Police Department. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Mark L. Nichols.