



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

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Two Former District Department of the Environment Officials Sentenced to a Year in Prison on Federal Bribery Charges **Defendants Admit Demanding \$20,000 in Bribes in Exchange For Covering Up Asbestos Contamination**

WASHINGTON - Joe L. Parrish, 52, and Gregory A. Scott, 60, former inspectors at the District of Columbia Department of the Environment (DDOE), Air Quality Division, were sentenced today to one-year prison terms for demanding and receiving \$20,000 in cash as bribes for not reporting serious environmental infractions and assessing fines and penalties.

The sentences were announced by U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr.; James W. McJunkin, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office; Charles J. Willoughby, Inspector General for the District of Columbia, and David G. McLeod, Jr., Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's criminal enforcement program in the District of Columbia.

Parrish, of Windsor Mill, Maryland, and Scott, of Temple Hills, Maryland, each pled guilty in March 2012 in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to one count of solicitation and receipt of a bribe by a public official. The Honorable Robert L. Wilkins sentenced them today. Upon completion of their prison terms, both men will be placed on two years of supervised release. During that time, each must perform 100 hours of community service.

As part of their plea agreements, both men have resigned from DDOE and to never seek employment with any federal or local government agency in the future.

Parrish and Scott were arrested September 1, 2011, following an investigation by the FBI's Washington Field Office and the District of Columbia Office of the Inspector General. The EPA later joined the investigation into the defendants' activities.

"When government officials treat their responsibility to the public as a commodity to be bought and sold, we are all put at risk," said U.S. Attorney Machen. "These corrupt inspectors were willing to sell out their obligation to protect the public from cancer-causing materials in

exchange for cash bribes. Such disregard for the public trust is offensive and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.”

“Mr. Parrish and Mr. Scott demanded bribes from contractors in exchange for not reporting serious asbestos infractions, in violation of the Clean Air Act,” said Assistant Director in Charge McJunkin. “This disregard for the health and safety of the public is unacceptable, and today’s sentencings demonstrate that those who commit such acts will be held accountable.”

“This matter again represents not only the commitment of the Office of the Inspector General in carrying out its mission to protect, among other things, the District’s treasury as well as the health and safety of its citizenry, but also how the office works with appropriate authorities in doing so,” said Inspector General Willoughby.

“There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos,” said Special Agent in Charge McLeod of the EPA. “Exposure to asbestos can cause cancer or other serious respiratory diseases. The fact that the defendants are public servants charged with insuring public health and safety make their actions even more disgraceful. Today’s sentencing demonstrates that anyone who knowingly places the public at risk will be prosecuted.”

According to statements of offense signed by the government as well as the defendants, as DDOE inspectors, Parrish’s and Scott’s primary duties and responsibilities included inspecting and monitoring contractors and abatement companies and investigating air quality complaints. They also prepared and submitted reports to DDOE attorneys to take action against those who violated environmental regulations. They were responsible for ensuring that contractors who were removing asbestos did so in a manner that protected the health and safety of the asbestos workers, building occupants and general public, and that all work was done in accordance with D.C. regulations and the federal Clean Air Act.

The charges involve dealings by Parrish and Scott with a general contractor and management company at a 10-story apartment building on P Street SW. The management company had hired the contractor to perform demolition and renovation work at the site.

On August 16, 2011, Parrish and Scott advised the general contractor that serious issues involving asbestos needed to be addressed. In the days that followed, the defendants showed photographs to the general contractor and detailed infractions that they said could result in significant fines. The inspectors then reached a preliminary agreement that the general contractor would pay them \$10,000 each to avoid the asbestos-related fines at the site.

On August 23, 2011, a cooperating witness - who worked for the management company that hired the general contractor - called Parrish to set up a meeting that afternoon with Parrish and Scott. That day, at approximately 2 p.m. – just minutes after an earthquake hit the Mid-Atlantic area – Parrish and Scott met with the cooperating witness at the apartment building. The inspectors said they were prepared to submit a report that could lead to proceedings against the management company to collect \$280,000 to \$300,000 in fines. They also warned that the infractions could be punishable by jail sentences. The inspectors said they

were willing to “burn” their report and not inform DDOE attorneys of the infractions, provided they were paid \$20,000.

The cooperating witness, who was working with law enforcement, then paid bribes of \$2,500 cash each as down payments to Parrish and Scott. The defendants agreed that they would not file their written report and other evidence of infractions with the DDOE.

On September 1, 2011, Parrish and Scott once again met with the cooperating witness at the apartment building to pick up the final \$15,000 payment for their agreement to overlook the asbestos-related infractions. During the meeting, the cooperating witness paid Parrish and Scott the \$15,000, and the two inspectors were then arrested.

In announcing the sentences, U.S. Attorney Machen, Assistant Director in Charge McJunkin, Inspector General Willoughby, and Special Agent in Charge McLeod praised those who investigated the case from the FBI’s Washington Field Office and the EPA’s area enforcement office, as well as Special Agent Elliott Taylor of the Office of the Inspector General for the District of Columbia.

They also commended the efforts of those who worked on the case from the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia, including Paralegal Specialist Diane Hayes, former Legal Assistant Jared Forney and Legal Assistant Krishawn Graham, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Lionel Andre, who prosecuted the matter.

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