

PRESS RELEASE

Lehi Man Sentenced for Stealing More than \$300,000 in COVID Relief Funds

Wednesday, September 11, 2024

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Utah

Salt Lake City, Utah – Neil Alan Johnson, 44, of Lehi, Utah, was sentenced to five years of probation and ordered to pay \$324,519 in restitution and forfeiture.

The sentence, imposed by a U.S. District Court Judge, comes after Johnson pleaded guilty to wire fraud in February 2024 after he defrauded the COVID-19 relief program, a federal program through the Small Business Administration (SBA) intended to help American businesses and employees weather the economic shock of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

According to court documents and statements made at Johnson's sentencing hearing, from March 2021 through November 2022, Johnson devised and engaged in a scheme to defraud and obtain money by lying and fraudulently submitting a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Loan Application to the SBA for approximately \$324,519 on behalf of his company. Then after obtaining the full loan amount, Johnson fraudulently submitted a PPP Loan Forgiveness Application to the SBA for the entire amount of the loan. His company, named "Neil Johnson," was located at his home in Lehi, Utah. Johnson submitted the loan applications as the sole proprietor of the company.

In furtherance of his scheme, Johnson lied on the applications. For example, on the initial loan application, he falsely represented that his self-named company had 21 employees, and an average monthly payroll of \$129,808.69, even though it did not. On the loan forgiveness application, he falsely represented that the company's payroll cost between March 25, 2021 and September 9, 2021, was \$352,463.80, and that he had used all \$324,519 of his loan funds to pay his employees' payroll. In reality, Johnson illegally used up to \$102,000 of the PPP-Loan proceeds to buy back his house in Lehi and transferred over \$39,000 of the loan proceeds to a separate account.

United States Attorney Trina A. Higgins for the District of Utah made the announcement.

The Utah Federal COVID-19 Fraud Strike Force investigated the case, which includes Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Office of Inspector General's U.S. Small Business Administration – Office of Inspector General (SBA-OIG), Department of Defense (DOD), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG), and the U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA). The public is encouraged to share information about the abuse of the Paycheck Protection Program or other SBA programs by submitting a complaint [here](#).

Assistant United States Attorney Todd C. Bouton of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Utah prosecuted the case.

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 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> and <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus/combatingfraud>.

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>.

Contact

Felicia Martinez

Public Affairs Specialist

Felicia.martinez@usdoj.gov

(801) 325-3237

[USAO-UT](#) | [Facebook](#) | [X](#) | [YouTube](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

Updated September 11, 2024

Topic

SECURITIES, COMMODITIES, & INVESTMENT FRAUD

Components

[Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#)

[Office of the Inspector General](#)

[USAO - Utah](#)

Press Release Number: 24-107