

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Eastern District of Wisconsin

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, March 9, 2017

Corporation and Three Individuals Charged with Environmental, Conspiracy, and Obstruction Crimes

United States Attorney Gregory J. Haanstad of the Eastern District of Wisconsin announced that on March 7, 2017, a federal grand jury returned an indictment against Grede, LLC, and Grede II, LLC (also known as Grede Wisconsin Subsidiaries, LLC), the corporate owners and operators of the former Grede Foundry in Berlin, Wisconsin. Also charged were Peter J. Mark (age: 53) of Ixonia, Wisconsin, the corporate safety and environmental director; and Steven G. O'Connell (age: 51) and Christy L. McNamee (age: 40), both of Zanesville, Ohio, who were formerly employed at the now shuttered facility.

The seven-count indictment alleges charges of conspiracy, obstruction of a federal investigation, the making of false statements, violations of the federal Clean Air Act and negligent endangerment.

According to the indictment, in January of 2012, workers at the foundry were ordered to assist in the refurbishment of a heat-treat oven which contained dangerous amounts of chrysotile asbestos. Proper asbestos abatement procedures were not implemented by the corporation or its managers. Workers were provided with inadequate safety equipment and were not told that the material they were removing contained asbestos. This contaminated material was then hauled away to a landfill by unsuspecting trash collectors.

The indictment further alleges that Mark, O'Connell, McNamee, and the corporate defendants conspired to obstruct state and federal investigators during subsequent inquiries into the presence of asbestos during the refurbishment of the oven.

If convicted of these offenses, Mark, O'Connell, and McNamee face maximum penalties ranging from 11 to 41 years imprisonment and hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines. The corporate defendants face millions of dollars in criminal penalties.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Criminal Investigation Division, the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Warden's Service.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the government must prove them guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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