



AG Van Hollen: Files criminal action against Dane County man – Joshua Burlin, along with a civil action against Burlin, his business partner – Shachar Elharar, and their business, Madison Locksmith, LLC
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MADISON — Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen has announced that the Department of Justice has filed criminal charges against Joshua Burlin, of Madison, stemming from an investigation into the business activities of Mr. Burlin and his company, Madison Locksmith, LLC. The Department has also filed a civil consumer enforcement case against Mr. Burlin, his business partner Shachar Elharar, also of Madison, and Madison Locksmith, LLC.

The criminal complaint, filed today in Dane County Circuit Court, charges Burlin with five counts of false swearing, based upon allegedly false testimony Burlin gave in a deposition taken by the Department of Justice in December 2009. Specifically, the complaint alleges that Burlin falsely testified that he had never listed fictitious addresses on the internet for his various locksmith business names, and that he had never posted fictitious consumer reviews either of his own business or of competing businesses. The complaint alleges that in fact Burlin used false addresses and posted phony reviews on the internet.

According to the complaint, Burlin has used the following business names for purposes of advertising, in addition to Madison Locksmith:

007 Locksmith

AAA Madison Locksmith

24/7 Locksmith

Affordable Twenty Four Hour Locksmith

24 Hour Emergency Locksmith

Crazy Larry's Auto Unlockers

Crazy Larry's Locksmith Service

24 Hour Fast Locksmith

Express Locksmith Madison

A aa Madison Locksmith

AAA All Day All Night Locksmith

Middleton Locksmith

A aaaaaa Paramount Locksmith

Madison Locksmith Express—24/7 Service

In addition, the complaint charges Burlin with one count of identity theft for allegedly posting a phony ad on Craigslist stating that a competing locksmith business was for sale. All six counts charged in the complaint are felonies.

Burlin is scheduled to make his initial appearance in Dane County Circuit Court on September 9, 2010, at 10:30 a.m. Assistant Attorneys General Eric Defort and John Greene are representing the state.

A copy of the criminal complaint is available at:

<http://www.doj.state.wi.us/news/files/CriminalComplaintFiled07302010.pdf>.

A criminal complaint is a document alleging a violation of the criminal law. The defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

The civil case, also filed in Dane County Circuit Court, alleges that Burlin, Elharar and Madison Locksmith engaged in a pattern of misrepresentations and deceitful conduct by posting numerous phony internet reviews of their own business, and also posting phony negative reviews of competitors' businesses, as well as using many false addresses designed to mislead consumers into believing that they were contacting a nearby locksmith establishment.

According to the complaint, the defendants sometimes posted numerous reviews purportedly by the same "consumer"—all on the same day but referring to different locksmith businesses or locations created by the defendants. For example, on the same day (February 12, 2009) someone using the screen name "octoberrain" posted 20 identical reviews of Madison Locksmith and 5 fictitious business names created by defendants, ostensibly located at different fictitious addresses created by defendants. The complaint alleges that the defendants are responsible for these and hundreds of similar phony reviews and internet listings.

The complaint also alleges that the defendants have misrepresented to customers that their locks cannot be opened and must be drilled out, resulting in the addition of substantial, unnecessary charges imposed on the customers.

A copy of the civil complaint is available at:

<http://www.doj.state.wi.us/news/files/CivilComplaintFiled07302010.pdf>.

The civil case has been assigned to Dane County Circuit Court Daniel R. Moeser, and is being

prosecuted by Assistant Attorney General John Greene.



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