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Guilty Pleas for Emissions Scam

Two North Pole men are convicted for an emissions scam that is part of an ongoing criminal investigation.

Robert A. Piser and James M. Trexler pled guilty this week before Fairbanks Superior Court Judge Randy M. Olsen on charges related to the fraudulent inspection of vehicles owned by Trexler and a second individual, Jeffrey J. Smith. In January, Piser, Trexler and Smith were indicted on felony counts of issuing or using fraudulent Inspection and Maintenance certificates to register vehicles with the State's Division of Motor Vehicles.

Piser and Trexler's pleas are the first to result from a joint criminal investigation by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Environmental Crimes Unit and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Criminal Investigation Division. The State's Office of Special Prosecutions is prosecuting the cases.

Piser pled guilty to a making a false statement in an application for registration, a felony. The court suspended imposition of sentence for two years on the condition that he pay \$750 in probation costs and complete 50 hours of community service. Trexler pled guilty to failing to have his vehicle validly inspected, a misdemeanor. The court suspended imposition of his sentence for one year on the condition that he pay \$500 in probation costs and complete 40 hours community service. The joint investigation continues to identify suspects and additional charges are anticipated. Smith's case is pending in Fairbanks Superior Court.

In 2009, the Fairbanks North Star Borough Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance Office discovered that certified test stations and mechanics had issued fraudulent emission certificates. The Borough brought the matter to DEC, which initiated an investigation. Of concern to the DEC and the EPA were several certified mechanics and test stations that knowingly sold or issued fraudulent certificates to vehicle owners. In addition to potential Clean Air Act violations, those fraudulently issued certificates were used to illegally register vehicles.