



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

KEVIN R. STEELE

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

EDWARD F. McCANN, JR.

FIRST ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY

COURTHOUSE

P.O. BOX 311

NORRISTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

19404-0311

MARK A. BERNSTIEL

CHIEF COUNTY DETECTIVE

ADRIENNE D. JAPPE

CHIEF OF STAFF

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S FAX

COUNTY DETECTIVE BUREAU

(610) 278-3090

(610) 278-3095

(610) 278-3368

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OWNER OF 1st CALL ELECTRIC ARRESTED FOR DEFRAUDING HOMEOWNERS IN SIX COUNTIES OF MORE THAN \$474,000



JOSEPH FORD

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (Jan. 23, 2023) — Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele and Lower Providence Township Police Chief Michael Jackson announce the arrest of Joseph Ford, 53, of Collegeville, owner and proprietor of 1st Call Electric LLC. Ford is charged with more than 300 felony counts related to the theft of \$474,185 from 64 homeowners in Montgomery, Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Philadelphia counties.

The investigation into Ford's business practices began on Aug. 22, 2022, when Lower Providence Township Police took two resident complaints of home improvement fraud involving Ford and his company. Lower Providence Police quickly determined that there were numerous victims beyond its jurisdictional area and contacted the Montgomery County Detective Bureau.

The joint investigation by Montgomery County Detectives and Lower Providence Police found that from Dec. 3, 2020 to Oct. 13, 2022, Ford was doing business as 1st Call Electric and took deposits from most of the 64 homeowners for the purchase of a home backup generator and for its installation. In about a dozen cases, the deposit was for electrical work to be performed, unrelated to a generator purchase. None of

the homeowners received generators, and the contracted electrical work was not performed. In several cases where residents used a credit card for payment to 1st Call Electric, their credit cards were charged more than once. The theft per homeowner varied, ranging from \$1,419 to \$16,450. The total theft from homeowners was \$474,185.

“This defendant was preying on homeowners, many of whom were concerned for their safety in the event of a power outage. He took large deposits from each homeowner, and simply never did any electrical work and never installed the generators,” said Steele. “We are consolidating all of these cases as a continuing course of conduct and will be vigorously prosecuting the defendant.”

Ford was arrested on Jan. 20, 2023 and charged with 64 felony counts each of Theft by Deception, Receiving Stolen Property, Deceptive Business Practices, False Statements to Induce Agreement for Home Improvement and Theft by Unlawful Taking, as well as four felony counts of Access Device Fraud. He was arraigned before Magisterial District Judge John Kessler, who set bail at \$50,000 cash. Ford was unable to make bail and was remanded to the Montgomery County Correctional Facility. A bail review hearing was held on Jan. 23, 2023, and Court of Common Pleas Judge Thomas A. DelRicci revised bail to \$50,000 10 percent, with an additional condition of no contact with any victim. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for 9 a.m., Jan. 31, 2023, before Magisterial District Judge Cathleen Rebar.

Ford had previously been charged for some of these homeowner theft cases in local jurisdictions. All of those cases have been withdrawn, and he will be prosecuted under one consolidated criminal complaint. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Michelle Shefton, of our Economic Crimes Unit.

Any customers of 1st Call Electric who believe they have been defrauded should contact the Montgomery County Detective Bureau at 610-278-3368 or the Lower Providence Township Police Department at 610-539-5901.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele

CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.