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For immediate release

## **Insurance agent charged with multiple counts of fraud, forgery**

For years, Luis Angel Dominguez Martinez promised clients a discount on their insurance if they paid with cash. But instead of applying it to their policies, Dominguez Martinez, a former Northfield insurance agent, used it to pay premiums on other clients' policies or deposited it in his own bank account.

The scheme, which began unraveling in 2020 and was investigated by the Northfield Police and the state Commerce Fraud Bureau, led the Rice County Attorney's Office on Friday to charge Dominguez Martinez, 25, with 34 felonies. In all, the former Northfielder faces nine counts of aggravated forgery, 12 counts of insurance fraud, six counts of theft by swindle and seven counts of financial transaction card fraud.

According to a lengthy criminal complaint, Dominguez Martinez, who grew up in Northfield, began working as an insurance agent used his connections to build his business. Many of his clients were undocumented, others did not have drivers' licenses or proof they owned the vehicle they were paying to insure.

Instead of using the funds paid to him for insurance, Dominguez Martinez started pocketing the money, sometimes paying for policies with other people's premiums, sometimes providing them with fake proof of insurance cards, sometimes just keeping the money. Other times he would use the credit cards of his clients to pay other clients' insurance.

The scheme first came to light in July 2020 when one of Dominguez Martinez's clients reported to Northfield Police that his insurance policies had been cancelled and that payments he made to Dominguez Martinez had not been applied in three years.

The client provided police insurance cards for five vehicles and receipts proving that he had paid Dominguez Martinez.

A company representative told police that the reporting person's automobile insurance has been cancelled for nonpayment 15 months prior, that insurance cards for one vehicle contained an invalid policy number and that the homeowner's policy number was that of another individual's life insurance.

Over the next several months, nearly a dozen others made reports of insurance fraud involving Dominguez Martinez to the Northfield Police, which referred the investigation to the Commerce Fraud Bureau.

Dominguez Martinez revealed the methods he used to defraud his clients to a Commerce Fraud Bureau agent during a November 2021 interview, admitting that many of his clients were Hispanic, members of the community he grew up in in Northfield. He said many of them came to him after receiving high premium quotes from other insurance companies and that many were willing to pay in cash because as undocumented individuals they didn't have bank accounts.

While Dominguez Martinez estimated he took advantage of 20-25 clients, his former employer identified 170 customers affected by the scheme and will write off nearly \$500,000 in losses, according to the criminal complaint. The charges, while significant, cover only a portion of the purported victims. Assistant Rice County Attorney Robin Finke explained that he's required to file charges only when he has sufficient evidence.

“We appreciate the thorough investigation of the Commerce Fraud Bureau and the work of the Northfield Police Department. This kind of predatory conduct causes problems for the victims who thought they had insurance their agent did not actually buy for them. This is a fundamental abuse of trust,” said Rice County Attorney John Fossum.

Dominguez Martinez is scheduled to make his first appearance in court on Aug. 24.

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