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# **News Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Thursday, March 26, 2009

## **Ramsey couple sentenced for conspiracy to defraud cable television service providers**

A Ramsey couple was sentenced today in federal court for defrauding cable television providers by selling illegal cable descramblers that allowed cable customers to receive premium and pay-per-view programming without payment to the cable companies.

On March 26 in St. Paul, United States District Court Judge Patrick Schiltz sentenced Jon Henry Sweeney, 52, and Michelle Ann Sweeney, 47, each on one count of conspiracy, one count of unauthorized interception of cable service, one count of aiding and abetting currency structuring and one count of currency structuring.

Jon Sweeney was sentenced to 70 months in prison, three years of supervised release and was ordered to pay a \$150,000 fine. Michelle Sweeney was sentenced to 42 months in prison, three years of supervised release and was ordered to pay a \$125,000 fine.

The Sweeneys were indicted on Aug. 8, 2006, and were convicted on May 8, 2008. The Sweeneys owned and operated Micro-Star Technology, a business with locations in Elk River and Ramsey. Under the Sweeneys' direction, starting in May 1996 the company engaged in the business of manufacturing and selling illegal cable boxes and circuit boards designed to descramble available cable television channels, including premium and pay-per-view ones, without payment for those services to defraud cable TV companies of subscription revenue.

Two additional defendants have already been sentenced for their roles in the conspiracy. Shawn Ray Orr, 38, Minnetonka, was sentenced on Nov. 26, 2008, to four months in prison and two years of supervised release on four counts of failure to pay over withheld taxes. Dana Lee Orr, 35, Minnetonka, was sentenced on Nov. 26 to 60 days in prison and two years of supervised release on four counts of failure to pay over withheld taxes.

Two remaining defendants – Abraham David Paquette, 31, Faribault, and Daniel Jason Quade, 38, Kerrick, – await sentencing. Both have pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy.

Paquette and Quade operated Core Innovation Systems (CIS), a company that purchased and sold for profit cable boxes modified to descramble cable TV channels. From August 2000 to August 2001, CIS purchased cable descramblers from Micro-Star Technology.

A federal jury found that Jon and Michelle Sweeney knowingly and willfully structured and assisted in the structuring of the purchase of a 2004 Chrysler Town & Country minivan on Oct. 11, 2003, for the purpose of avoiding the filing of a currency transaction report. After negotiating the purchase price of \$32,163.22, Jon Sweeney paid \$9,900 in cash, and Michelle Sweeney wrote a check for the remaining \$22,263.22. Federal law provides that any financial transaction over \$10,000 in currency must be reported to the Internal Revenue Service.

The jury also found that on Jan. 20, 2004, Jon Sweeney knowingly and willfully structured the purchase of a 2003 Ford Focus. After he negotiated the purchase price of \$10,699.75 and paid a \$50 deposit, Sweeney paid \$9,900 in cash and wrote a check for the remaining \$749.75.

Finally, the jury found that on Oct. 28, 2002, Michelle Sweeney knowingly and willfully structured a financial transaction at the First National Bank of Elk River based on a \$9,900 cash withdrawal.

Paquette and Quade each face a potential maximum penalty of five years. Paquette is scheduled to be sentenced on April 2, and Quade is scheduled to be sentenced on April 6.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the IRS-Criminal Investigation Division. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Michelle E. Jones and Leshia Lee-Dixon.