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REISTERSTOWN WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO ARSON

Baltimore, Maryland - Michele Heckner, age 40, of Reisterstown, Maryland, pleaded guilty today to arson, announced United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein.

According to the plea agreement presented to the court, on May 31, 2005 Heckner set fire to a business known as Lady Baltimore Flooring, located at 2874 Baltimore Boulevard, Finksburg, Maryland, where she was employed. Heckner also attempted to blow up the propane tanks near the outside wall of the building. Prior to arriving at the arson scene, Heckner called a veterinary clinic adjacent to the building of the flooring company to ensure that no one was present to see her. An accelerant, similar to kerosene or lighter fluid, was found inside the building; and acetone, a flammable liquid, was found outside at the base of the propane tanks. The property sustained damages in excess of \$400,000.

Heckner faces a mandatory minimum sentence of five years and a maximum of 20 years in prison followed by five years of supervised release. U.S. District Judge William M. Nickerson has scheduled sentencing for March 20, 2007 at 10:00 a.m.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein praised the investigative work performed by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Mr. Rosenstein thanked Assistant U.S. Attorney A. David Copperthite, who is prosecuting the case.