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## 201 area people suspected of Social Security, other fraud

Ingham, Eaton counties lost \$332,500 to false claims, fed, local investigators say

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Lansing State Journal

### What's Next

The fraud cases against 201 Ingham and Eaton county residents suspected of fraud involving Social Security, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and/or the Michigan Department of Human Services are under review by the Eaton County Economic Crimes Unit. Anyone charged in the case will have an opportunity to escape criminal prosecution by repaying the amount fraudulently received, plus a fee. Those who do not make the payment face a possible jail or prison term of nine months to 10 years, depending on the amount of the fraud.

DELTA TWP. - Local, federal and state authorities say an investigation has turned up 201 cases of suspected fraud, mainly involving false Social Security claims, in Ingham and Eaton counties.

Charges have not been filed yet.

The results of the probe, announced Monday afternoon at a news conference at the Delta Township substation of the Eaton County Sheriff's Department, also involved false claims involving the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Michigan Department of Human Services.

The investigation was part of a joint effort in six Michigan counties that identified \$1.17 million in suspected fraud. In Eaton and Ingham counties, the total was nearly \$332,500.

Doug Lloyd, assistant Eaton County prosecuting attorney, headed up the investigation for both counties.

"We have a good working relationship with Eaton County," said Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunning III.

"They already have an economic crimes unit, and it only made sense to have one assistant prosecutor speak for both counties."

Lloyd said no one has been charged in the cases, which are under review by his department.

Most of the cases involve people falsely claiming to have lost Social Security checks and obtaining replacements.

That, in effect, gave them double payments.

"About 90 to 95 percent of the people we have confronted about this have confessed," Lloyd said.

### Repayment possible

Those who committed fraud will be able to escape criminal charges if they repay the money defrauded, plus a fee.

Anyone who does not make the payment faces a possible jail or prison term of nine months to 10 years, depending on the amount of the fraud.

William Cotter Jr., special agent in charge of the Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General, said investigations also took place in Berrien, Ottawa, Kalamazoo and Calhoun counties.

Other probes are under way in northern Ohio and Wisconsin.

Cotter called the cooperative effort among federal, state and local agencies "unprecedented."

### **'This is just greed'**

Dunnings said the fraud appears to have nothing to do with Michigan's slow economy.

"This is just greed," he said.

"In these days of budget deficits, where there is fraud like this the answer is often to get rid of the program.

"In this case, we are trying to preserve programs for the many law-abiding citizens by getting rid of the people who abuse the system."

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