



**U. S. Department of Justice**  
*United States Attorney*  
*Eastern District of Washington*

**PRESS RELEASE**

<b>FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE</b>  Friday, June 23, 2006	<b>FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:</b>  Thomas Rice, First Assistant U.S. Attorney (509) 353-2767
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**“FORMER TEMPORARY POSTMASTER PLEADS GUILTY  
TO TAMPERING WITH A CONSUMER PRODUCT”**

Spokane - James A. McDevitt, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington, announced that Carolyn Sturgeon, age 60, of Malden, Washington, pleaded guilty to one count of an Indictment charging her with Tampering with a Consumer Product, in violation of Title 18, United States Code Section 1365(a). Chief United States District Court Judge Robert H. Whaley released Sturgeon pending the sentencing hearing, which hearing is scheduled for September 21, 2006.

During yesterday’s change of plea hearing, Carolyn Sturgeon acknowledged that on July 13, 2005, she was working at the Malden, Washington, Post Office as the Temporary Postmaster. That day, she opened a certified mail packet that had been sent from the St. John’s Pharmacy in St. John, Washington, to a Postal customer who is suffering from spinal cord tumors. The Postal customer takes Oxycodone according to a daily dosage regime to help relieve the constant, severe pain caused by the spinal cord tumors. The mail packet contained a prescription bottle holding 84 tablets of Oxycodone, which the customer had been prescribed. Sturgeon removed the Oxycodone tablets from the prescription bottle and replaced them with 84 tablet of Synthroid, a thyroid medication that Sturgeon had been prescribed. Sturgeon placed the prescription bottle now holding the Synthroid tablets back into the certified mail packet and, thereafter, caused the packet to be delivered to the Postal customer.

Later that day, the Postal customer received the mail packet and subsequently placed two of the Synthroid tablets in her mouth according to the dosage regimen for Oxycodone. The customer, however, removed the tablets before swallowing them and, out of caution, called the St. John’s Pharmacy. The Pharmacy, which had complied with and followed all proper procedures, confirmed the description of the tablets as being Synthroid, a medication neither stored nor dispensed by the Pharmacy.

If the Postal customer had ingested the Synthroid tablets according to the daily dosage regime for Oxycodone, the customer could have suffered a cardiac arrest. Had an overdose of Synthroid occurred, and had paramedics responded, it would have been difficult to ascertain that the customer ingested Synthroid, because the prescription bottle was labeled as Oxycodone. In all events, the Synthroid tablets would not have provided any relief of the customer’s pain.

A conviction for Tampering with a Consumer Product carries a maximum penalty of ten years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and 3 years of court supervision after release.

The public should be reminded that tampering with a consumer product and tampering with the U.S. mails (particularly by a Postal Service employee) are serious crimes, which will be investigated and aggressively prosecuted in the Eastern District of Washington.

This investigation was conducted by the United States Postal Inspection Service. This case is being prosecuted by Joseph H. Harrington, Assistant United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington.