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PRESS RELEASE

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Butte County Man Convicted by Jury on His Many Lies

A former Butte County resident who committed construction fraud in Paradise after the Camp Fire; lied to the court; and fled from the courthouse to Utah; has been convicted by a Butte County jury of five felonies.

Kipp Ford, 40, formerly of Gridley and Chico, was found guilty on Friday, October 14, 2022, after a six-day trial for using a false contractor's license number, theft by false pretenses, and contracting without a license in a disaster zone. He was also found guilty of submitting a false declaration to the court and failing to appear in court.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said the case began in 2019 when a local construction company reported to the Paradise Police Department they had been scammed by Ford, who claimed to be a licensed contractor but was not. Police learned Ford had signed several subcontracts for houses being rebuilt in the town of Paradise after the Camp Fire. Within days, the general contractor became suspicious about Ford due to his shoddy workmanship and evasive answers, and soon found the license number Ford had provided them actually belonged to another contractor out of Southern California.

Ramsey said Ford chose to take the stand in his own defense during the trial, testifying for almost a full day. In response to the contracting fraud charges, Ford claimed that despite the evidence of signed contracts where he claimed to be a licensed contractor, he was actually just a "1099 laborer" and did not need a license. Ford accused the contractor he victimized of writing in the false license number without his knowledge after Ford had signed the clearly marked subcontracts.

Ford was also charged with filing a false declaration with the court in March of 2022 in an attempt to excuse his failure to appear in court on March 16, 2022. Ramsey said his office investigated the declaration and determined Ford had lied, so new charges were filed. When Ford did appear in the court on March 30, 2022, he found out about the new charges. He then fled from the courthouse after requesting to speak to his attorney outside the courtroom about the new felony charges. Ford was arrested several weeks later at a girlfriend's house in Utah where police found him hiding in a back garage cabinet.

Ford's false declaration claimed Ford lived in Colorado and he had to report to work on a large

contract there or be fired from his job. Ramsey said his office presented evidence to the jury that Ford was the sole owner and proprietor of this company, did not have a supervisor, could not be “fired” unless he fired himself, and did not even live in Colorado at the time.

Ford tried to excuse his flight from the courthouse by claiming to the jury that he had an “emergency” business deal relating to a family land sale that he needed to deal with in Texas, so he elected to leave rather than follow the court’s orders to remain in the courthouse to be arraigned on his new false declaration charge.

Ramsey said that Ford’s massive flurry of lies finally caught up to him.

The trial prosecutor, Deputy District Attorney Mike Tufaro, argued to the jury that: “Mr. Ford has built a house of lies to shield himself from the truth... but the evidence has poured forth and you (the jury) have seen its foundation crack and the walls fall in, leaving Mr. Ford standing in a ruin of his own making – with the truth that he is guilty shining down on him.”

Ramsey said the jury deliberated for less than two hours before returning with a verdict of guilty on all charges. The jury also convicted Ford on special allegations that Ford committed new crimes while out on bail.

Ford is being held without bail in the Butte County Jail and will be sentenced on November 16, 2022. He faces up to nine years in state prison.