



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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PRESS RELEASE

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Man Charged with Camp Fire Construction Fraud Flees Courthouse

A former Butte County resident charged with numerous felony crimes related to construction fraud in Paradise appeared in Butte County Superior Court today. A preliminary hearing on the charges was expected to proceed today before Judge Corie Caraway; however, during a break in the proceedings, the man fled the courthouse.

District Attorney Mike Ramsey said Kipp Ford, 40, formerly of Gridley and Chico, was supposed to be in court two weeks ago for his preliminary hearing, but he failed to appear. Instead, Ford's attorney provided a declaration, signed by Ford under penalty of perjury that stated Ford was residing in Colorado, and was scheduled to work on a Bureau of Land Management contract and that if he missed his shift by attending court he would lose his job. Ramsey said district attorney investigators looked into Ford's excuses and found them to be false. As a result, Ramsey charged Ford with an additional crime of filing a false document, on which he was to be arraigned today.

Ramsey said Ford did appear in court today, but not for long. When Ford arrived, he was unaware the new case involving the false document had been filed against him. The in-court deputy prosecutor Ashley Furry told the court in front of Ford that it was apparent Ford had lied in order to get out of court two weeks prior. Furry asked the court to place Ford in custody and for him to be held without bail.

Ford's attorney asked if he could speak to Ford outside of the courtroom. Furry expressed her concern that Ford would not return if the court granted his attorney's request. Judge Caraway admonished Ford of the consequences if he failed to return to the courtroom. Approximately 30 minutes later, the defense attorney returned to the courtroom without his client. The attorney explained his client told him he had to get something out of his truck but never returned. Judge Caraway immediately issued no-bail arrest warrants for Ford's arrest.

Ramsey said Ford's underlying construction fraud crimes occurred in 2019 when Ford, claiming to be a licensed contractor, began rebuilding two homes destroyed in the Camp Fire. Once he got an advance payment of over \$17,000, he stopped building and fled the area. It was determined Ford at the time falsely claimed to have a contractor's license, which was not his. It took several years to find him and get him to court.

Ramsey said Ford previously lived in both Chico and Gridley, but more recently, he has been tied to Utah, Colorado, Texas, and New Mexico. Ramsey asked that if anyone has any information as to Ford's current whereabouts, please contact the District Attorney's Office at (530) 538-7411 or at 1-866-DA-FRAUD.

