



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **VALLEY BUSINESSMAN SENTENCED TO 2½ YEARS IN PRISON FOR SELLING NON-CONFORMING GASKETS USED ON BOEING JETS**

A Woodland Hills businessman was sentenced today to 30 months in federal prison for selling uncertified rubber gaskets that were installed on Boeing 737 aircraft.

Duane Lepire, 74, was sentenced this morning by United States District Judge S. James Otero in Los Angeles. Lepire pleaded guilty in April to one count of fraud in the sale of aircraft parts.

Lepire, who owned and operated the Canoga Park-based Chatsworth Rubber and Gasket Company, sold "commercial grade" O-rings to aircraft parts brokers by falsely claiming that the O-rings were certified for use in the manufacture of aircraft parts.

Lepire purchased the commercial grade O-rings – which are cheaper, do not require an aircraft quality manufacturing process, and are not sold with any type of certification – and repackaged the O-rings, identifying them as having been manufactured by well-known aviation quality manufacturers. When he sold the non-conforming O-rings, Lepire submitted bogus "certificates of conformance" and painted markings on the O-rings to make it appear as if they had been manufactured by aviation quality manufacturers.

The non-conforming O-rings were used to make vibration dampeners on Boeing 737 aircraft and caused the vibration dampeners to leak hydraulic fluid. While the non-conforming O-rings posed a safety hazard, there are no crashes associated with the

non-conforming O-rings that Lepire sold.

When Boeing discovered the problem with parts sold by Chatsworth Rubber and Gasket, Lepire submitted a false Certificate of Conformance certifying that the O-rings met specifications for aircraft parts, as well as false documents that purported to be from a well-known aviation parts broker referencing the O-rings in question.

In rejecting Lepire's plea for probation, Judge Otero noted the "very devious" nature of the fraud and that Lepire had endangered the flying public.

This case was investigated by the United States Department of Transportation, Office of Inspector General; NASA's Office of Inspector General and the Defense Criminal Investigative Service.

Three months ago, the FAA issued an "Unapproved Parts Notification" for O-rings sold by Chatsworth Rubber and Gasket (see: [http://www.faa.gov/aircraft/safety/programs/sups/upn/media/2009/upn\\_2006-00012.pdf](http://www.faa.gov/aircraft/safety/programs/sups/upn/media/2009/upn_2006-00012.pdf)).

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