



Department of Justice

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**FORMER EXECUTIVE OF WINDOW BLIND SLAT MANUFACTURING COMPANY
AGREES TO PLEAD GUILTY FOR ROLE IN
CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT WIRE FRAUD**

WASHINGTON — A former chief operating officer of a window blind slat manufacturing company has agreed to plead guilty for his role in a conspiracy to defraud customers, the Department of Justice announced today.

A criminal case filed today in the U.S. District Court in Cleveland charged Todd M. Markey of Houston with one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud for his participation in a scheme to defraud customers by secretly convincing competitors to increase slat prices by 8 percent. “Slats” are the vertical or horizontal louvers of window blinds that can be adjusted to let in light.

Under the plea agreement, which is subject to court approval, Markey has agreed to cooperate with the Department’s investigation into collusive activity in the window blind slat industry. He is the second defendant to be charged in the investigation.

Under his plea agreement, Markey faces a jail sentence of up to 16 months. The court will determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed and whether to accept the plea agreement.

“The public expects and is entitled to the benefit of a truly competitive marketplace,” said Thomas O. Barnett, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Department’s Antitrust Division. “The Antitrust Division will vigorously pursue those who conspire to defraud customers by eliminating competition.”

According to the criminal charge, between about April 2002 and July 2002, Markey and his co-conspirators carried out the conspiracy by:

- Agreeing to convince competitors to secretly increase prices by 8 percent;
- Making and agreeing on assignments to contact specific competitors; and
- Contacting competitors, including by means of interstate telephone calls, to convince them to take part in their price-fixing scheme.

Markey worked at the same company as Mario Cadorette, who in April 2007 was indicted on charges of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and wire fraud for his role in the same

conspiracy with which Markey was charged. Cadorette was president of the company and Markey reported to him.

The maximum penalty for a count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 371 is five years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

Today's charge resulted from an investigation of the slats industry by the Antitrust Division's Cleveland field office with the assistance of the Cleveland and Houston offices of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Anyone with information concerning price fixing or related offenses in the window blind slat manufacturing industry should contact the Cleveland field office of the Antitrust Division at 216-687-8400 or the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Cleveland office at 216-522-1400.

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