



ROD PACHECO
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

OFFICE OF
THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE

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CONTACT: John Hall, PIO
(951) 955-8662

CRIMINAL CASE UPDATE

**MAN MUST STAND TRIAL FOR JURY TAMPERING
DURING RAYMOND OYLER ARSON TRIAL**

RIVERSIDE – The brother-in-law of convicted arsonist and death row inmate Raymond Lee Oyler must stand trial on seven counts of jury tampering.

A judge today, March 4, 2010, ruled there is enough evidence against Christopher Vaughn Hillman, 48, for the Hesperia man to stand trial.

In October 2006, Oyler started the deadly Esperanza Fire in the Cabazon pass which killed five U.S. Forest Service firefighters. The blaze burned more than 41,000 acres and destroyed 34 residences.

Oyler was charged with the murders of the five firefighters and his trial was held from January through March 2009. A jury convicted Oyler of five counts of murder and recommended he face the death penalty. Judge W. Charles Morgan sentenced Oyler to death on June 5, 2009.

During the trial, on or about Feb. 26, 2009, Hillman prepared and delivered fliers to vehicles parked in County of Riverside juror parking lots. The fliers were copies of newspaper articles describing various pre-trial rulings by Judge Morgan in Oyler's trial which prohibited the defense from introducing certain evidence. The fliers were discovered by three of the jurors in Oyler's trial during the noon recess and Riverside County sheriff's deputies located four more fliers on the windshields of other jurors in the case.

The Riverside County District Attorney's Office began an investigation to determine who was responsible for tampering with the jury in a very significant death penalty case. The investigation narrowed in on Hillman and investigators served a search warrant at his residence. Inside the home, investigators found strong evidence linking Hillman to the fliers.

Hillman's next court date is for an information arraignment on March 19, 2010, in Dept. 41 of the Hall of Justice in Riverside.

The case, RIF152103, is being prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Tim Cross.

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3960 Orange Street - Riverside CA, 92501
www.RivCoDA.org