

Farmers Insurance Worked Closely With Florida Law Enforcement Agencies in Helping Bust 'Operation Crash for Cash' Ring  
**Hillsboro County Sheriff's Office Today Arrested a number of Individuals in Staged Accident Ring**

PRNewswire

Farmers Insurance Group® cooperated with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, Florida Department of Financial Services, and National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) in an eight-month investigation involving staged vehicle crashes and insurance fraud in Hillsboro County.

(Logo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20080605/LATH062>)

"Operation Crash for Cash" resulted in arrest warrants for 22 people, and search warrants at two medical clinics in Hillsborough County. Thirty-two suspects have already been charged with staging crashes. Detectives began to round up suspects and serve the search warrants Friday, April 23. The suspects include clinic employees, massage therapists and participants in staged crashes. The criminal charges range from Racketeering Influenced Corrupt Organization (RICO), a first-degree felony, to staging vehicles crashes.

"Farmers applauds the efforts of the Hillsborough County Sheriffs office, the Florida Department of Financial Services and NICB for their ongoing efforts in the fight against insurance fraud," stated Doug Ashbridge, Director of Special Investigations for Farmers Insurance.

"Farmers is committed to fighting fraud, no matter where it occurs and no matter what form it takes. We will continue to cooperate with law enforcement on these and other matters around the country, working to deter anyone from attempting to defraud Farmers and its policyholders," Ashbridge continued.

The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, in conjunction with the NICB began "Operation Crash For Cash" in September 2009 after deputies noticed a pattern of questionable vehicle crashes.

"Undercover detectives developed confidential informants and learned which medical clinics they believed were being used in the alleged fraud. According to authorities, detectives were also able to identify the recruiters and coordinators they believe would solicit individuals to conduct staged crashes and then direct them to a particular medical clinic to allegedly sign blank medical forms. It is further alleged that at the clinics, crash participants would be coached on how to describe their injuries or pain to physicians," Ashbridge explained.

"Numerous individuals were identified as active participants in the organized activity and some of them are believed to have filed fraudulent insurance claims with Bristol West Insurance Group, a part of Farmers Insurance Group®," Ashbridge said. "We are committed to stamp out fraud and will assist law enforcement on criminal matters and file our own civil actions to deter anyone who submits fraudulent insurance claims. It is our commitment to our policyholders to take fraud out of their premium dollars."

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