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*****MEDIA ALERT*****

For Immediate Release

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SERIAL CAR PARTS THIEF CONVICTED

Evansville, IN –Daniel Eugene Payne, a habitual offender, was found guilty of catalytic converter theft this week in a jury trial before Magistrate Judge Celia Pauli of the Vanderburgh County Circuit Court. Payne faces a sentence minimum of 2.5 years up to 8 years in prison.

Payne’s conviction comes after a thorough investigation of catalytic converter thefts by Evansville Police Department Sergeant Anna Gray who was assisted by Detective Vonderscher, and Vanderburgh County Sheriff Sergeant Hertwick. Payne was developed as a suspect when his distinctive Chevrolet Blazer was caught on surveillance at the sites of the thefts. Payne was eventually linked to several thefts –stealing nearly \$9,000 of car parts in three commercial vehicles during one sweep, as one example.

At trial, Deputy Prosecutor Joshua Hutcheson presented crime scene photos and surveillance videos to the jury. After the guilty verdict, Hutcheson thanked internal staff in the Prosecutor’s Office, especially legal secretary Tiffany Lubbehusen, Victim Advocates Melissa McCutchan and Teresa Wink, and Kennadi Hagan for assisting in trial preparation.

Prosecutor Diana Moers thanked her staff and law enforcement for a thorough investigation and prosecution of this theft: “While violent crimes concern us all, these thefts also affect the everyday life, peace, and dignity of Vanderburgh County in a negative way. We will continue to investigate and use all of the resources we have to drive out those who wish to take from others. At sentencing, we will argue for Mr. Payne to leave this county to reside in the Department of Correction where he will be unable to profit from our citizens by stealing.” Sgt. Gray responded: “This was a complicated case involving multiple agencies, but it is a great example of teamwork at its best. I would like to thank the Vanderburgh County Sheriff’s Office, the Vanderburgh County Prosecutor’s Office, and my colleagues at the Evansville Police Department for the many hours spent working on these cases.”

Sentencing is scheduled for August 30, 2023 in front of Magistrate Judge Celia Pauli of the Vanderburgh County Circuit Court.

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