



NEWS FROM SCDCA

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
Carri Grube Lybarker, Administrator



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SCDCA Media Contact: Juliana Harris, 803.734.4296
Email: JHarris@scconsumer.gov

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1.800.922.1594 (toll free in SC)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cheraw Man Indicted on 106 Preneed Law Violations

Columbia, SC... A Grand Jury indicted the former owner of Norton Funeral Home, Hubert Craig Norton, on 106 counts of violating the Preneed Funeral Contracts Law and breach of trust with fraudulent intent. This is the first case of its kind in South Carolina.

The Department of Consumer Affairs (“SCDCA”) and the Cheraw Police Department began receiving complaints from consumers after the close of Norton Funeral Home located at 417 3rd Street, Cheraw, South Carolina in August 2011. The complaints concerned funds paid in advance to Norton Funeral Home for preneed burial contracts. SCDCA’s comprehensive investigation into Mr. Norton’s dealings revealed that he sold preneed funeral contracts without a license and failed to put funds in a trust account.

The Preneed Funeral Contracts Law dates back to the 1960s, with SCDCA taking over as the administrator and enforcer in 2006. The most recent amendments were made in the last Legislative Session. The 2012 changes, spearheaded by Rep. Bill Sandifer of Seneca, include stiffer penalties for violators with the addition of two felony penalties. The amendments also removed the cap on the Preneed Loss Reimbursement Fund (“fund”). The purpose of the fund is to reimburse the estates of consumers defrauded by a preneed funeral contract provider. To date, SCDCA processed four fund reimbursement requests linked to the Norton matter totaling nearly \$10,000.

The Chesterfield County Fourth Circuit Solicitor’s office, with assistance from SCDCA Investigators and the Cheraw Police Department, is prosecuting the case. Mr. Norton is presumed innocent unless and until proved guilty in a court of law.

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SCDCA aims to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, complaint mediation, enforcement and education. To file a complaint or get information on consumer issues, visit www.consumer.sc.gov or call toll-free, 1.800.922.1594.

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