

NEWS RELEASE



Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office
71 Monument Park
Freehold, New Jersey 07728
732/ 431-7160
Luis A. Valentin, Prosecutor

HEROIN PRODUCTION FACILITY DISCOVERED IN OCEAN GROVE; HIGHLY PURE HEROIN, HANDGUN, HOLLOW NOSE BULLETS AND BODY ARMOR SEIZED

On February 23, 2010, Detectives from the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office went to a rooming house in the Ocean Grove section of Neptune Township, N.J., in order to serve an arrest warrant on a resident of the rooming house. In addition to locating the subject of the arrest warrant, the Detectives discovered a heroin production facility in the man's room. The man, Leon D. Eccles, 27, has been charged with numerous narcotics-related crimes.

The arrest warrant which the Detectives went to Eccles' residence in order to execute was issued after Eccles failed to appear in a local municipal court. A lawful search of Eccles' residence after his arrest on the municipal arrest warrant resulted in the seizure of approximately 40 grams - equivalent to approximately 1 ½ ounces - of heroin, together with equipment and packaging materials, including scales and baggies, commonly used to process and package heroin for street level sales. The lawful search of Eccles' residence also resulted in the seizure of a .357 caliber revolver which was loaded with hollow nose bullets, and a bullet-proof vest.

Individuals who are engaged in packaging heroin for distribution typically "cut" the heroin with a cutting agent in order to increase the quantity of their product. The "cutting" process results in a diminishment of the purity of the heroin. Based upon the physical appearance of the heroin and its odor, the investigating law enforcement authorities believe that the seized heroin was highly pure. Depending on the purity of the heroin and the packaging process, the seized 40 grams of heroin has a potential street value in the Monmouth County area of approximately \$10,000 to \$20,000.

Eccles has been charged with one count of first degree Maintaining or Operating a Controlled Dangerous Substance Manufacturing Facility, one count of third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, one count of second degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent To Distribute, one count of second degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent To Distribute Within 500 Feet

of a Public Park, one count of second degree Unlawful Possession of a Handgun, one count of second degree Possession of a Firearm While in the Course of Committing a Drug Offense, one count of third degree Unlawful Possession of a Body Vest and one count of fourth degree Unlawful Possession of Hollow Nose Bullets. Eccles has also been charged with the disorderly persons offenses of Possession With Intent to Use Drug Paraphernalia and Possession of Hypodermic Syringes.

Following the arrest, Monmouth County Superior Court Judge Thomas F. Scully set bail for Eccles at \$200,000 cash only. A bail source hearing is required before bail may be posted for Eccles.

The Asbury Park and Neptune Township police departments assisted in the investigation.

If convicted of first degree Maintaining or Operating a Controlled Dangerous Substance Manufacturing Facility, the maximum potential custodial sentence is a State Prison term of up to 20 years with a minimum mandatory period of parole ineligibility of up to one-half of the custodial term imposed. If convicted of a second degree crime, the maximum potential custodial sentence is a State Prison term of up to 10 years. If convicted of a third degree crime, the maximum potential custodial sentence is a State Prison sentence of up to five years. If convicted of a fourth degree crime, the maximum potential custodial sentence is a term of imprisonment of up to three years. The maximum imprisonment allowable for a disorderly persons offense is a term of six months.

Despite these charges, every defendant is presumed innocent, unless and until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, following a trial at which the defendant has of the trial rights guaranteed by the United State Constitution and State law.

The case is assigned to Assistant Monmouth County Prosecutor James E. Jones, Jr.

Released: March 2, 2010