



News Release

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Milaca tax preparer charged with 45 tax-related felonies

ST. PAUL, Minn. – The Minnesota Department of Revenue announced that the Mille Lacs County Attorney’s Office recently charged Cindy M. Halgren with 45 tax-related felonies. Ms. Halgren, of Milaca, is charged with 39 felony counts of preparing false or fraudulent tax returns, 3 felony counts of filing false or fraudulent income tax returns, and 3 felony counts of failing to pay state income tax.

According to the complaint, Ms. Halgren operated a tax preparation service, Clearview Tax, out of her home. Department investigators determined that between 2012 and 2018, Ms. Halgren prepared and submitted false tax filings for multiple individuals and herself. Ms. Halgren allegedly identified significant write-offs that resulted in improper refunds going to her customers. The complaint lists 12 individuals who had tax returns prepared by Ms. Halgren. All 12 identified false or exaggerated business expenses or write-offs on their tax filings. These items included uniform expenses that were never incurred, business vehicles that the individuals did not own or know about, union dues when the individuals were not part of a union, and cellphone expenses for businesses that did not exist, according to the complaint. Many returns appeared to include expenses for activities that customers identified to Ms. Halgren as hobbies, but were portrayed as business deductions. Ms. Halgren allegedly filed the tax returns on the individuals’ behalf without reviewing them with her customers or having them sign the returns.

Ms. Halgren also falsified information in her own income tax returns and property tax refund returns filed for 2014 through 2016. The complaint states that, because of these fraudulent returns, Ms. Halgren received more than \$23,000 in improper tax refunds.

Each tax-related felony charge carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison, a \$10,000 fine, or both. Defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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Although the department does not certify tax preparers, state law requires that tax professionals who prepare income tax returns must follow its standards of ethics and conduct. The majority of tax professionals abide by these standards and provide honest service and sound advice to their clients. In the rare event that a tax professional does not comply with these standards, they may be subject to penalties or criminal prosecution and may be barred from representing clients before the department. Taxpayers can report unprofessional conduct through [the department's tax preparer page](#) or by calling 651-296-3781.

Although most taxpayers comply with tax laws voluntarily, the department takes enforcement action against noncompliant taxpayers to ensure that tax laws are administered fairly.

Many of the department's criminal case referrals come from public tips. There is a 24-hour tip line for anyone who suspects that a person or business is violating Minnesota tax laws. Local callers may dial 651-297-5195 or call toll-free by dialing 1-800-657-3500. Tips can also be submitted to the department by email at tax.fraud@state.mn.us. Tipsters may choose to remain anonymous.

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