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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: March 22, 2011
Re: People v. Eddie Henry Zarate, Jr.
Stanislaus County Superior Court
Case Numbers 1427421 & 1429379

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Eddie Henry Zarate, Jr., age 43, of Modesto, was convicted on March 22, 2011 of two counts of financial elder abuse and admitted an enhancement for committing a felony while out on bail on another felony case. Deputy District Attorney John B. Goulart prosecuted the case for the People.

Between September 10th and 23rd of 2010, Zarate, who is not now nor has he ever been a licensed contractor, contracted with a 74 year-old Modesto homeowner to fix a leaky shower head. He fixed the shower head and charged the homeowner \$525. He then came back a few days later and falsely claimed that the law required him to return and test the water pressure in the house. Shortly thereafter, he reported to the homeowner that all of the pipes in her house, both interior and exterior, were bad and needed to be replaced. The homeowner then paid him \$2,600 by check. Thereafter, Zarate insisted on being paid in cash, claiming his wallet and ID had been stolen, preventing him from being able to cash a check. The homeowner then paid him \$5,000 in cash, followed by a cash payment of an additional \$4,000. The homeowner's daughter then put an end to the scam, notifying the Modesto Police Department. Modesto Police Detective Robert Rodenberg arrested Zarate. Zarate subsequently bailed out of jail.

In March 2011 while he was out on bail on the first case, Zarate knocked on the door of a 77 year-old Modesto homeowner and asked if she needed any sprinklers repaired. She said yes. Zarate then reported to her that she needed a new shut off valve on her main water line and all her faucets needed to be replaced because they had calcium buildup. The homeowner then paid Zarate \$750 by check, followed by \$450 in cash. Soon thereafter, Zarate asked for and received an additional check for \$2,250. When the homeowner's son became aware of what was going on, he assisted his mother in putting a stop payment on the check. The Modesto Police Department (MPD) was called and on March 8, 2011, Officer Kelly Rea arrested Zarate following MPD's investigation. At the request of Officer Rea, the Honorable Jack M. Jacobson, set Zarate's bail at \$500,000. Zarate has remained in custody since his arrest.

As part of the plea agreement resolving these two cases, a third financial elder abuse case pending against Zarate was dismissed with Zarate agreeing to pay restitution to the victim, a 73 year-old homeowner, in the amount of \$5,675. That case was investigated by Investigator Bryce Allwardt of the California Contractors State License Board.

Upon entry of the no contest pleas, the Honorable Marie Sovey Silveira sentenced Zarate to five years in state prison. Zarate was ordered to pay a total of \$19,000 in restitution. He will return to court on April 8, 2011, for further proceedings.

These cases illustrate how important it is for homeowners to hire only licensed contractors. Licensing credentials can easily be checked by utilizing the California Contractors State License Board's website at www.cslb.ca.gov. The search can be performed using a purported contractor's personal name, a business name, or a license number. You can find out more by accessing the District Attorney's website at www.stanislaus-da.org. Click on the "Services" button, and then click on "Consumer Fraud." The District Attorney's website contains links to many other helpful consumer websites.

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