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**Yacht Broker Charged with Felony Theft of Sales Tax**

**Everett, Wash.,** May 27, 2008 — An Everett yacht broker was charged today with felony theft of sales tax and filing false state tax returns.

Ronald J. Sperry, 59, is accused of failing to remit nearly \$359,000 in sales tax he collected from late 2004 through 2007 on sales of yachts through his businesses, Everett Yacht Sales and Hanan Yachts.

The charges were brought in Snohomish County Superior Court by the Criminal Justice Division of the Washington State Attorney General's Office at the request of the Washington State Department of Revenue.

According to charging papers, Sperry reported about \$5.5 million in sales to the Department of Licensing but less than a quarter of that to the Department of Revenue. Sperry allegedly pocketed the sales tax paid to him by customers of yachts he sold. He also was underreporting the 10 percent commissions he made on those sales, which are subject to business and occupation tax.

When audited by the Department of Revenue, Sperry claimed he had lost most of his records, but the Department was able to reconstruct his sales activity by examining Department of Licensing records necessary to transfer titles of the yachts he sold.

Felony theft of sales tax is punishable by up to 10 years in prison and a \$20,000 fine, plus restitution.

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**OPINION**