



**United States Department of Justice
United States Attorney's Office
District of Minnesota**

News Release

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Owatonna man indicted for producing and possessing child pornography

MINNEAPOLIS—A 45-year-old Owatonna man was recently indicted in federal court for producing videos and images containing child pornography and possessing similar items. On December 5, 2011, Michael William Sherman was charged with one count of production of child pornography and one count of possession of child pornography.

The indictment alleges that from September through December of 2010, Sherman enticed and coerced a young boy and girl to engage in sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing visual depictions of the activity. It also alleges that on January 14, 2011, Sherman possessed images and videos containing child pornography. On January 14, 2011, the items were found on a computer during the execution of a search warrant at Sherman's residence. In addition, the images and videos of the two victims were found on Sherman's cell phone.

If convicted, Sherman faces a potential maximum penalty of 30 years in federal prison on the production charge, with a mandatory minimum penalty of 15 years. In addition, he faces a potential maximum penalty of ten years on the possession charge. All sentences will be determined by a federal district court judge.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, the Dodge County Sheriff's Office and the Owatonna Police Department. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney David P. Steinkamp.

Presently, the Justice Department is funding a study concerning the correlation between involvement in child pornography and the hands-on sexual abuse of children. A 2008 study (The Butner Study) published in the Journal of Family Violence found that up to 80 percent of federal inmates incarcerated for possession, receipt, or distribution of child pornography also admitted to hands-on sexual abuse of children, ranging from touching to rape.

The U.S. Department of Justice is committed to combating the sexual exploitation of children, particularly via the Internet. In Fiscal Year 2010, 2,235 defendants pleaded guilty to federal child pornography charges, 2,222 of whom were sentenced to prison. In Fiscal Year 2009, 2,083 defendants were sentenced to prison on child pornography charges. For more information about these efforts, please visit the Department's Project Safe Childhood website, at www.projectsafchildhood.gov.

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An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by a defendant. A defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.