



# NEWS RELEASE

**RALPH HUDGENS**  
COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE  
SAFETY FIRE COMMISSIONER  
INDUSTRIAL LOAN COMMISSIONER

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Seventh Floor, West Tower  
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334  
[www.oci.ga.gov](http://www.oci.ga.gov)

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Contact: Glenn Allen  
404-463-0729  
[gallen@oci.ga.gov](mailto:gallen@oci.ga.gov)  
Twitter: @GA\_DOI

## HUDGENS: FORMER AGENT ARRESTED FOR INSURANCE FRAUD

**ATLANTA** -- Insurance Commissioner Ralph Hudgens and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation today announced the arrest of a Baldwin County insurance agent on multiple counts of insurance fraud.

Richard Bentley, 52, of Milledgeville, Ga., was arrested this afternoon and charged with 7 counts of misappropriation of insurance premiums and 5 counts of issuing fraudulent certificates of insurance. Bentley, who owned and operated the Wilkerson Insurance Agency located at 221 N. Wayne St., in Milledgeville was booked into the Baldwin County Jail.

According to a joint investigation conducted by Hudgens' Fraud Investigation Division and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Bentley allegedly kept premium payments received from certain customers for insurance coverage and converted the money to his own use instead of sending it to the appropriate insurer. The joint investigation also determined that on several occasions, Bentley issued fraudulent certificates of insurance to customers when they attempted to purchase insurance through his agency.

"These individuals believed they had insurance coverage, but actually had no legitimate coverage," Hudgens said. "Such actions constitute a violation of a trust between an agent and policyholder, a violation I take very seriously."

An excess of \$34,000 in premium money is believed to have been misappropriated by Bentley. The investigation is ongoing and additional charges against Bentley could occur.

Insurance fraud is a felony with a penalty of two to 10 years in prison or a fine of up to \$10,000.

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