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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: October 30, 2008
Re: Christopher Eugene Neal-
Burglar Sentenced to
19 Years in Prison

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Christopher Eugene Neal, age 47, of Modesto, was sentenced on October 30, 2008 to 19 years in state prison. The defendant had entered a plea of guilty on September 17, 2008 to residential burglary and admitted two prior convictions which fall under the "Three Strikes Law" and also qualified as serious felonies. Deputy District Attorney Rob Taro prosecuted the case for the People.

The case arose out of events which occurred on September 5, 2006, in the city Riverbank when Neal burglarized the victims' home in Riverbank at approximately 11:30 p.m. The victims were home and witnessed him break into an attached garage and called 9-1-1. When they saw the defendant exit their garage carrying their personal property, the homeowner was able to confront Neal in the backyard and a foot chase ensued. The Stanislaus County Sheriff's Patrol Division responded to this call and apprehended the defendant running down an alley away from the home of the victims. The victims were able to identify Neal as the perpetrator of this crime.

On October 30th, 2008 the Honorable Scott Steffen presided over the sentencing hearing. Neal's lawyer requested that Steffen strike one of the priors which falls under the "Three Strikes Law" and not impose the 25 to life term. The People opposed that request. The victims of this crime communicated with the court through the Stanislaus County Probation Officer that they felt that "36 years is too much for this, he should get around 5."

After hearing arguments from both sides, and being mindful of the statements of the victims, Judge Steffen did strike one of the "strike" priors and sentenced Neal to 19 years in state prison. Neal must serve 85% of his sentence before he is eligible for parole.

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