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Huckaby Pleads to Death by Distribution

On November 4th, 2025, William McKinley Huckaby, age 42 of Leland, pled guilty to Death by Distribution and Attempted Trafficking in Methamphetamine. He was sentenced by Judge R. Kent Harrell to 76-104 months in prison followed by an additional 24 months in the residential recovery program TROSA for a total of a minimum of 100 months before Huckaby can return home.

On June 24, 2022, James Ray Lewis, age 42, died as a result of fentanyl toxicity. A syringe and other drug paraphernalia indicative of fentanyl ingestion was found near Lewis. New Hanover County Sheriff's Office investigators would later discover text messages between Lewis and Huckaby. In one message, Huckaby encouraged Lewis to steal vacuums from a retailer in exchange for payment in the form of drugs. Other messages indicated that Huckaby had profited previously on tools illicitly obtained by Lewis in exchange for drugs. At the time of his arrest, Huckaby was in possession of roughly 26 grams of methamphetamine as well as a dosage unit of fentanyl.

“William Huckaby encouraged those severely addicted to opioids to steal merchandise for him with the promise of fentanyl for payment,” said District Attorney Jason W. Smith. “Huckaby’s exploitation of the addicted represents why our lawmakers enacted the Death by Distribution law. In many instances, severe addiction disrupts the decision-making parts of the brain, and those who make a profit while exploiting this addiction will be sent to prison.”



William McKinley Huckaby