

# Angora Fire fraud suspect can't post bail

By Kathryn Reed

Former Red Cross employee John Hellman is behind bars in El Dorado County Jail in Placerville on charges stemming from allegedly taking money that was intended for survivors of the 2007 Angora Fire.

Hellman's bail was set at \$150,000. He is charged with 11 counts of grand theft.

He is accused of taking \$16,000 from the organization that was assisting the 254 households that lost their homes in the June 2007 fire on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe.

The 49-year-old was arrested by authorities in August in Texas and then extradited to California.

The Sacramento Red Cross office discovered what it calls "financial malfeasance" in January during a regular audit.

"In the course of the internal audit we came across some discrepancies," said Carol Evans, spokeswoman with the Red Cross in Sacramento.

She said her organization wants Hellman to pay back the money he allegedly stole.

Hellman had an office in the Community Disaster Resource Center in South Lake Tahoe. This group was formed after the June 2007 Angora Fire to help people living in the burn area.