

BUSINESSWOMAN IS ACCUSED OF USING OTHERS' INFO TO GET LOANS

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NORFOLK

Farmers and residents in and around Smithfield have been shaken by the news that the former owner of a farm equipment company faces a federal wire fraud charge alleging that she used the names of friends and customers to obtain more than \$1 million in loans.

Linda Rowland, 60, appeared in U.S. District Court on Friday. Magistrate Judge F. Bradford Stillman released her pending a July 2 return date. If convicted, Rowland could face up to 20 years in prison.

An investigation going on for more than a year revealed that Rowland used the names of customers and friends to obtain more than \$1.7 million in financing for equipment that never existed, according to an FBI affidavit.

When confronted with the allegations, and after failing a lie detector test, Rowland admitted that she took out the bogus loans because her and her husband's business - Rowland Equipment Co. - was failing, the affidavit says. Her husband has not been implicated. Their sons now run the business.

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