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Linden man charged with committing lewd acts in front of children at public park

A Linden man has been arrested and criminally charged with performing lewd acts in front of children at a city park, acting Union County Prosecutor Lyndsay V. Ruotolo and Linden Police Chief David Hart jointly announced Tuesday.

Paul J. Schappe, Jr., 68, is charged with second-degree sexual assault, third-degree aggravated criminal sexual contact, and two counts of third-degree endangering the welfare of a child.

A joint investigation by the Prosecutor's Office's Special Victims Unit and the Linden Police Department determined that at approximately 1 p.m. on Sunday, May 2, Schappe allegedly approached a juvenile under the age of 13 who was playing basketball in Clifford Lawson Memorial Park and directed comments of a sexual nature toward him while touching himself inappropriately over his clothing, according to Union County Assistant Prosecutor Bruce Holmes, who is prosecuting the case. The investigation further revealed that Schappe had been seen allegedly masturbating in the park while partially nude on at least one other occasion, when multiple children were present.

Schappe was arrested Monday evening without incident and lodged in the Union County Jail pending a first appearance and detention hearing to take place in Union County Superior Court.

Anyone with any information about this matter is being urged to contact Prosecutor's Office Detective Jessica Tattoli at 908-341-5418 or Linden Police Department Detective David Nolasco at 908-474-8521.

Convictions on charges of this nature can result in sentences of 5 to 10 years in state prison.

These criminal charges are mere accusations. Every defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.