

# Three Women Charged In Fake Rape Cases

SHALIMAR (AP) — In an unusual twist, three Florida Panhandle women have been charged with filing false rape complaints.

"It's a real switch for us to arrest women who said they were victims," says Deputy Shirley Boles, a rape investigator for the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Department.

During the last month, six rapes have been reported to Okaloosa County authorities. But sheriff's agents say four of the complaints were phony.

"We've arrested two women on charges of filing false reports to law enforcement officers," Miss Boles said. "We charged a third woman and we're working on the papers in

the fourth case." Filing a fake rape complaint is a misdemeanor violation of Florida law, the deputy said. Miss Boles and her partner, Anti-rape Specialist Jo Hunter, say women who falsely accuse men of rape should be punished because phony complaints damage the credibility of legitimate sex abuse investigations. "This type of thing isn't only a crime; it sets women back light years in their attempts to bring real rapists to justice," said Miss Hunter, also a deputy. "It not only hurts the men who are falsely blamed and face life prison sentences, but it hurts all women everywhere. It's like the boy who cried 'wolf.'" Motivations for filing false rape complaints vary, but the investigators

said some women are misusing rape laws because they feel upset about sex or are just spiteful.

In one case here, a young woman was miffed because she thought her boyfriend had a date with another woman, according to deputies. She accused the boyfriend of rape.

Another case involved a woman who performed a sex act after she was offered money. When the man refused to pay,

she accused him of rape. Miss Boles said. Sex offenses are often difficult to prove in court. Likewise, phony rape complaints are tough to disprove, say investigators here.

"We have to treat all complaints as bonafide," Miss Boles said. "But we're trying to put a stop to these false reports because they waste so much time that we could be spending trying to catch actual rapists."