



Amtrak OIG investigation leads to indictment of former Amtrak employee for pandemic relief fraud

For Immediate Release

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PHILADELPHIA – A Philadelphia woman and former Amtrak employee was charged September 9, 2022, with one count of mail fraud, two counts of theft of public money, and one count of bank fraud all related to her alleged scheme to defraud pandemic relief programs, according to a press release from the US Attorney’s Office.

The indictment alleges that Ricarda Burrell, 49, of Philadelphia, fraudulently applied for and received Pandemic Unemployment Assistance while employed full-time at Amtrak. In June 2020, Burrell allegedly submitted a pandemic unemployment assistance program application that falsely claimed that she had lost her job due to the pandemic, and she continued to submit weekly certifications that stated she had no unemployment income despite being an Amtrak employee at the time. In sum, Burrell received \$9,379 in unemployment benefits throughout her alleged scheme.

In addition, Burrell applied for and received a Paycheck Protection Program loan for what she claimed was a small catering business. As part of the application, she allegedly made false statements about the business’ date of establishment, monthly payroll, number of employees, and prior year’s income. She allegedly submitted other fraudulent documents to substantiate the loan amount of \$134,552.50. Burrell was terminated from employment with Amtrak after the alleged crimes occurred.

“We remain committed to investigating any case where there are credible allegations of fraudulent activities,” said Mike Waters, Special Agent in Charge of the Amtrak Office of Inspector General Eastern Field Office. “This indictment is indicative of that commitment and was the result of hard work by dedicated staff coupled with seamless collaboration with the U.S. Attorney’s Office and the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.”

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Timothy Lanni.

Reports of fraud, waste, or abuse; criminal or unethical acts affecting Amtrak’s property or operations; or mismanagement in Amtrak programs or operations can be made 24 hours a day via the Amtrak OIG Hotline at 1-800-468-5469 or online at <https://direc.to/hPAu>.

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