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Southern District of Texas

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FORMER POSTAL EMPLOYEE CONVICTED OF STEALING MONEY FROM THE USPS

(HOUSTON) – A former letter carrier has pleaded guilty to stealing money from the United States Postal Service (USPS) while on duty, United States Attorney José Angel Moreno announced today.

Indicted for theft of public money on March 4, 2010, Juan DeDios Vargas, 35, of Houston, pleaded guilty to the charge today before U.S. District Court Judge Gray Miller, admitting to using his USPS-issued Voyager cards for his own personal use and financial gain. Vargas was a letter carrier with the USPS for 13 years.

The investigation, conducted by USPS-Office of Inspector General (OIG) agents, leading to the charges against Vargas began on Aug. 22, 2008, after a USPS Manager at the Eastwood station noticed several fraudulent Voyager card transactions. The USPS-OIG investigation found that from July 1, 2008, through Nov. 13, 2008, Vargas used multiple Voyager cards to make unauthorized gasoline purchases totaling \$17,829.39.

When asked about the fraudulent transactions, Vargas stated that the unauthorized fuel was either purchased for his own personal use or sold at a discount to other individuals. Vargas would pump gasoline for others at the gas station using a Voyager card and his personal identification number, then take a small fee in cash from his “customers.” Video footage and photos captured Vargas unlawfully using the Voyager cards at gas stations. Vargas profited approximately \$8,500 in payments from people for discounted gasoline with a total loss to the USPS of approximately \$17,829.39.

Free on bond since he turned himself in to law enforcement authorities on March 19, 2010, Vargas has been permitted to remain on bond pending his sentencing. Judge Miller, who accepted Vargas’ guilty plea, has set sentencing for July 9, 2010. A conviction for theft of public money carries a maximum punishment of 10 years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

Assistant United States Attorney Suzanne Elmilady is prosecuting the case.

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