

News Release

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FORMER POSTAL EMPLOYEE SENTENCED FOR EXAGGERATING HER MEDICAL CONDITION AS PART OF EFFORT TO DEFRAUD \$125,000

A former employee of the United States Postal Service was sentenced to a week in jail and ordered to pay \$125,755 in restitution after previously admitting to exaggerating her medical condition and other acts, said Steven M. Dettelbach, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio, and Robert LaPina, Special Agent in Charge for the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General.

Melissa Scherz Leist, age 37, of Coshocton, and formerly of Sandusky, pleaded guilty to earlier this year to one count of fraud in the obtaining of Federal Employee's Compensation Act (FECA) benefits.

Leist resigned from the Postal Service prior to her plea.

Leist fraudulently exaggerated her medical condition and limitations, fraudulently rejected limited duty job offers by the United States Postal Service, falsely represented her physical abilities and range of activities and deliberately concealed activities which would have made her ineligible for disability benefits, all for the purpose of fraudulently obtaining FECA benefits in excess of \$125,000, according to court documents.

“The majority of postal employees who collect compensation benefits have legitimate claims due to on-the-job injuries and are truly unable to perform any postal jobs,” LaPina said. “A small percentage, however, abuse the system and cost the Postal Service millions of dollars in fraudulent claims. This guilty plea should put those employees who choose to abuse the system on notice that USPS OIG agents will vigorously investigate worker compensation fraud and will seek criminal prosecution and termination of their job and benefits when appropriate.”

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Thomas A. Karol following an investigation by the United States Postal Service, Office of Inspector General.

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