



State of Tennessee

Justin P. Wilson, State Comptroller

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Bedford County Public Funds Were Used to Buy Brand Name Clothes, Expensive Meals and Other Questionable Items

Nearly \$47,000 of Bedford County Emergency Communications District funds were spent to buy brand name clothing, expensive meals and other questionable items over a period spanning more than six years.

That was one of the key findings in an audit released today by the Comptroller's Division of Local Government Audit. The Bedford County Emergency Communications District receives 911 fees collected from telephone bills to provide enhanced 911 emergency telephone service for the area it serves.

While the district's former director claimed the clothing purchases were for employee uniforms, receipts show that items were purchased from Eddie Bauer, The Gap, Cabelas, Dillard's and several small specialty stores.

The former director also charged numerous meals to the district's credit cards in situations in which there was no documentation that she was traveling overnight on business. Examples of these charges included an \$84.84 tab at J.Alexander's restaurant in Franklin and a \$40.03 tab at Toot's in Murfreesboro. In addition, meals were purchased by the former director while on overnight travel status even though she had already received a travel advance which included meals and incidentals.

There was also little or no documentation to verify other purchases the former director made were for business-related purposes, including a bag purchased at a Coach store in Pigeon Forge, two iPods, two Nooks and a Bosch Pro Drill. The bag, the drill, one iPod and one Nook have not been returned to the district.

The audit also identified several other problems:

- The former director, board members and employees routinely received travel advances without filing follow-up expense reports to document how the travel advances were

spent.

- Employees were sometimes reimbursed for meals when they were not traveling and for personal vehicle mileage expenses when they were traveling in district-owned cars.
- Cell phones issued to district employees appeared to be used for personal purposes based on usage charges for downloads, pix/flix messaging, and hot spot service.
- The district also purchased some goods and services without putting them out for competitive bids, including a new SUV and heating, ventilation and cooling upgrades to the district's communications center.

“Whether money is collected through taxes or surcharges on telephone bills, it is still public money and should be spent only for purposes that benefit the public,” Comptroller Justin P. Wilson said. “Many of the expenditures outlined in this report simply should not have occurred. The district’s board of directors needs to do a better job of oversight to prevent these types of issues from cropping up again in the future.”

To view the report online, go to: <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/la/>

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