



Jason E. Mumpower, Comptroller of the Treasury

December 21, 2023

Former Knox County Rescue Employee Stole More Than \$44,000

An investigation by the Tennessee Comptroller's Office has resulted in the indictment of Charlotte McLawhorn, the former financial administrative assistant for Knox County Rescue (KCR).

Comptroller investigators determined that McLawhorn misappropriated KCR funds totaling at least \$44,020.31 from September 2020 through April 2023, when she left KCR for another job. The investigation began after Knox County officials identified and reported allegations to the Comptroller's Office.



McLawhorn's primary scheme involved using KCR credit cards to make personal purchases including airline tickets, salon expenses, medical bills, vacation rentals, and retail shopping. In addition to using her issued KCR credit card, she also made purchases using three cards that had formerly been assigned to other employees and had been turned over to her. Furthermore, McLawhorn made personal purchases using KCR's online Amazon account.

Investigators revealed that McLawhorn made at least 62 false entries in KCR's accounting software to conceal her unauthorized purchases. For example, she changed the description of a Vera Bradley purchase to "Quality Inn - Lodging" in KCR's accounting software, which was used to generate financial reports for county reimbursement.

The investigation also identified other questionable credit card purchases totaling \$9,325.29 and questionable fuel purchases totaling \$2,735.90. Many of these transactions lacked proper documentation and investigators were unable to determine whether they benefited KCR.

Based upon this investigation, in December 2023, Charlotte McLawhorn was indicted by the Knox County Grand Jury on one count of theft of property over \$10,000, one count of Tennessee Computer Crimes Act violations over \$10,000, one count of forgery over \$10,000, and four counts of fraudulent use of credit cards.

"Once again we see a situation where one person is given too much financial responsibility," said Comptroller Mumpower. "The same person should not be collecting, depositing, and disbursing funds as well as maintaining accounting records and reviewing bank and credit card statements without oversight. This approach invites the potential for fraud, waste, and abuse."

To view the investigative report, go to tncot.cc/doireports. To view a map depicting Comptroller investigations, go to tncot.cc/mappinginvestigations

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