

New Bedford Postal Service Employee Pleads Guilty to Embezzlement

A U.S. Postal Service (USPS) employee pleaded guilty today to embezzling over \$20,000 in payments from customers for money orders and stamps.

Austin Correia, 22, of New Bedford, pleaded guilty to one count of theft of embezzlement and theft of public money, property or records. U.S. District Court Chief Judge Patti B. Saris scheduled sentencing for Nov. 20, 2019. In June 2019, Correia was charged by indictment and arrested.

Correia began working for USPS at the end of 2017 as a Sales & Service Distribution Associate at both the Mount Pleasant and Coffin Station Post Offices in New Bedford. In this role, Correia had the ability to issue foreign and domestic postal money orders and sell stamps to customers. Correia engaged in a scheme in which he received a cash payment from customers to purchase stamps or money orders, but voided out the valid transactions to make it appear as if they did not occur. Correia provided the customer with the USPS product, but took the cash payment for his own personal use either by pocketing the money or by purchasing gift cards sold at the Post Office. In total, Correia embezzled over \$20,000 from USPS.

The charging statute provides a sentence of up to 10 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. According to the terms of the plea agreement, the government will recommend a sentence of two years of probation with the first six months to be served in home confinement, 25 hours of community service and restitution in the amount of \$20,584. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other

statutory factors.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling and Matthew Modafferi, Special Agent in Charge of the United States Postal Service Office of Inspector General, Northeast Area Office, made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Eugenia M. Carris of Lelling's Public Corruption & Special Prosecutions Unit is prosecuting the case.