

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Former Dover Postmaster Admits Misappropriating at Least \$10,000 in Various Schemes to Defraud Postal Service

(More)

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NEWARK – A former Dover postmaster pleaded guilty today to misappropriating more than \$10,000 in United States Postal Service funds, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Phillip L. Hall, 51, of East Orange, a former postmaster at the Dover, New Jersey Post Office, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Stanley R. Chesler to a one-count criminal Information charging him with misappropriating U.S. Postal Service funds.

Hall admitted that he allowed another Postal Service employee to perform extensive carpentry work at the residence of his ex-wife – also a Postal Service employee – while the employee was on Postal Service time. The work, he said, took the equivalent of about five work weeks to complete.

Hall further admitted that he allowed Postal Service employees to donate accrued vacation hours (annual leave) to Hall's ex-wife and in turn falsified those employees' time and attendance records to indicate they were working when they were not, according to Assistant U.S. Attorney Joyce M. Malliet. Hall admitted that the total hours of "donated" time from five postal employees amounted to two months of annual leave time for his ex-wife.

Hall admitted that the loss to the Postal Service from the carpentry work and annual leave donations was more than \$10,000 and less than \$30,000.

Additionally, Hall admitted that he and another supervisory Postal Service employee steered plumbing, heating and air-conditioning work to a contractor in Effort, Pa. Hall admitted that he and the other supervisory employee allowed the contractor to regularly submit bills for services at inflated prices. In return, Hall said, they accepted cash payments from the contractor.

One other guilty plea from the investigation had taken place previously, and another defendant was indicted.

Mark DiBattista, of Newton, N.J., the owner of a Newton automobile repair and mobile wash service, pleaded guilty on June 8, 2005. John Balliro, of Hamburg, N.J., a former Post Office operations manager, was indicted on Feb. 28, 2007, and awaits trial scheduled for June 26.

News releases on those cases can be found by following links to their respective dates at: www.usdoj.gov/usao/nj/press/index.html

Judge Chesler set Hall's sentencing for Aug. 16. Hall is free in the meantime on a \$50,000 unsecured bond.

The charge to which Hall pleaded guilty carries a statutory maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. However, under the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, Hall faces a probable sentencing range of between six and 12 months in federal prison.

In determining the sentence, Judge Chesler will consult the advisory sentencing guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence and can sentence within, above or below the guidelines range.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Christie credited Special Agents from the United States Postal Service, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Jane Hughes, Special Agent in Charge of the New York and New Jersey Field Offices, with developing the case against Hall. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Joyce M. Malliet of the Special Prosecutions Division of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Newark.

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Defense Counsel: Thomas R. Ashley, Esq. (Newark)