

Government Employee “Sorry” for Spending \$114,000 in Eighteen Months on Government Purchase Card

Written by Nick Sanders

Wednesday, 31 October 2012 08:45



Yes, you would be sorry, too—if you had just [been caught](#) spending \$114,494 in unauthorized personal expenses on your government purchase card. Who wouldn't be?

Perhaps she was too young to know any better? After all, Ms. Jihan Cover, of Arden, North Carolina is only 34 years old.

Perhaps she didn't understand that her government purchase card was only to be used for bona fide procurements related to her agency's mission? After all, she was a Purchasing Agent with the National Institutes of Health's National Cancer Institute, an entity within the Department of Health and Human Services. Sure, as a Purchasing Agent, her "sole job function involved procuring authorized items and services for NIH/NCI using assigned government credit cards." Although as part of her job, she had "received regular training in the proper use of government credit cards," perhaps it was insufficient for her to grasp the notion that her government purchasing card was not, in fact, her personal credit card.

For whatever reason, Ms. Cover made more than 250 unauthorized personal transactions via her purchasing card, worth \$114,494, between June 2009 and December 2010—about eighteen months. That's about \$6,400 per month, for those keeping score.

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Here are some of the details—

During this period of time ... Cover used and caused to be used her NIH/NCI purchase cards to make over 170 personal purchases totaling approximately \$16,000 from Amazon.com for items that included toys, exercise equipment, books, clothes and other personal times. Almost all of these items were shipped to Cover's residence in Arden. In addition, Cover admitted using her NIH/NCI purchase cards to pay off over \$29,000 in balances she accrued with various cash advance and payday loan vendors.

... Cover also used and caused to be used her NIH/NCI purchase cards to make more than \$47,000 in payments to personal accounts she caused to be created on PayPal, an online payment website. Cover directed over \$46,000 from these PayPal accounts to be deposited into bank accounts that she controlled. Plea documents also revealed that in an effort to conceal her misuse of assigned purchase cards, Cover created additional PayPal accounts associated with email accounts that she controlled and which she selected to resemble the name of a legitimate NIH/NCI vendor. In this manner, Cover made over \$11,000 in additional hidden payments to these PayPal accounts.

Ms. Cover may have seemed dumb, but she was smart enough to attempt to conceal her misdeeds. As reported—

In addition, Cover admitted that she further sought to conceal her actions by submitting various dispute forms to the bank servicing her purchase cards, claiming that she did not recognize certain charges or did not authorize them, when, in fact, she knowingly made or caused to be made the personal charges. ... Cover admitted that ... she lied to investigators, claiming that she had satisfied personal transactions made with her NIH/NCI purchase cards using her personal bank account, which in fact she knew she had not. Previously, when confronted by her supervisor at NIH/NCI regarding suspicious transactions, Cover claimed falsely that she had been the victim of identity theft, when in fact she knew that she had caused the transactions.

Ms. Culver was sentenced to six months in prison for her crime of stealing government funds.

We ... don't know what to say about this. Alleged identify theft. Misuse of government-issued credit card. Disputed charges. Deliveries to one's home address. This one is too bizarre for us.

We only know it will be very difficult for Ms. Cover to find another way to misuse a government-issued purchase card in the future.

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