

OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY
JAMES C. BACKSTROM
COUNTY ATTORNEY



Dakota County Judicial Center
1560 Highway 55
Hastings, Minnesota 55033-2392
Phillip D. Prokopowicz, Chief Deputy
Karen A. Schaffer, First Assistant
Monica Jensen, Community Relations Director

Telephone
(651) 438-4438
FAX: (651) 438-4479 (Civil Division)
FAX: (651) 438-4500 (Criminal Division)
FAX: (651) 438-4499 (Juvenile/Admin Division)
E-mail: attorney@co.dakota.mn.us

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NEWS RELEASE

BURNSVILLE WOMAN CHARGED WITH SWINDLING HER FORMER EMPLOYER

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom announced that Laura Michelle Schwartz, age 36 of Burnsville, has been charged* today with 10 counts of Theft By Swindle (all felonies) in connection with the theft of over \$183,000 from June 2007 until January 2012 while she was employed by a freight shipping company in Eagan. Schwartz started as a clerical support person for the freight company and in 2005 was allowed to work from her home. Her duties for the company expanded to include billing and collecting from clients, bank reconciliations, book keeping and disbursing payments on behalf of the company.

After an audit of the company records, several suspicious transactions linked to Schwartz's password were discovered. This information was reported to the Burnsville Police Department and the investigation revealed that approximately 182 fraudulent transactions were apparently initiated by Schwartz between June 2007 and January 2012. The funds ended up in Schwartz's personal bank accounts, either directly or through the deposit of checks issued to another unknown individual. This included 82 checks and 100 electronic-fund transfers. Schwartz allegedly used the funds to pay for personal items such as utilities, legal fees, childcare, children's athletics, schools, automotive and health care.

Additional facts pertaining to this case can be found online at www.DakotaCounty.us/Attorney (click on Criminal Complaint Search and/or News Release). If in custody, a mug shot can be viewed at www.DakotaCounty.us/Sheriff (click on Inmate Search).

Backstrom commented: "This is a major financial crime that resulted in significant loss during difficult economic times for this business. This is the 23rd major economic crime exceeding \$50,000 in loss prosecuted in Dakota County since 2006."

Backstrom thanked the Burnsville Police Department for their quick and thorough investigation of this matter.

Schwartz was arrested/turned herself in and made her first appearance in court today and bail in the amount of \$50,000 without conditions (\$25,000 with conditions) was set by Dakota County District Court Judge David Knutson. Schwartz's next court appearance is set for October 2nd at 9:00 a.m. in Hastings.

If you have questions, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4438.

**Criminal charges are not evidence of guilt. A defendant/suspect is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.*