



Former Amtrak employee pleads guilty to theft of 114 chainsaws and parts totaling more than \$76k

For Immediate Release

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NEWARK, N.J. — A former Amtrak employee pleaded guilty to a charge related to his theft of approximately 114 Amtrak-owned chainsaws and other chainsaw parts totaling more than \$76,000 and then selling the equipment for personal profit, Acting U.S. Attorney Rachael A. Honig announced today.

Jose Rodriguez, 49, of Brick, New Jersey, pleaded guilty by videoconference today before U.S. District Judge Zahid N. Quraishi to an information charging him with one count of mail fraud. Rodriguez was charged by complaint in March 2021 with one count of theft from an agency receiving federal funds and one count of theft of government property.

According to court documents and statements, Rodriguez, a former Amtrak senior engineer and repairman based in North Brunswick, allegedly obtained 114 chainsaws, 122 chainsaw bars, and 222 chains from Amtrak between March 2012 and July 2020, the total value of which was more than \$76,000. Rodriguez obtained the equipment under false pretenses, claiming it would be used for Amtrak projects.

In reality, he sold the equipment on an online auction service or directly to purchasers. Rodriguez used the U.S. Postal Service to mail the stolen chainsaws and parts to purchasers throughout the U.S.

Honig credited detectives from the Amtrak Police Department, New York Division and Mid-Atlantic Division under the direction of Chief Sam Dotson, and agents from Amtrak OIG under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael J. Waters, Eastern Field Office, for conducting the investigation leading to today's guilty plea.

The mail fraud charge carries a maximum potential penalty of twenty years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Sentencing is scheduled for April 19, 2022.

Reports of fraud, waste, or abuse; criminal or unethical acts affecting Amtrak's property or operations; or mismanagement in Amtrak programs or operations can be made 24 hours a day, seven days a week via the Amtrak OIG Hotline at 1-800-468-5469 or online at <https://amtrakoig.gov/report-fraud-waste-abuse>.

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