Amtrak OIG supports DOJ-led nationwide COVID-19 fraud takedown; former Amtrak employee pleads guilty to wire fraud

September 21, 2026

FORT WAYNE—A former Amtrak employee and Indiana resident pleaded guilty June 24, 2026, for her role in a fraud scheme that bilked at least $435,415 from pandemic relief programs, according to court records filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Indiana.

Shywanna Dear, 45, of Portage, Indiana, pleaded guilty to one count of wire fraud and admitted to receiving at least $56,165 in proceeds from the fraud scheme. According to her plea agreement, from at least June 2020 through at least May 2022, Dear participated in a scheme to obtain Paycheck Protection Program funds from financial institutions and the SBA by providing false information in 22 applications submitted on behalf of herself and others. Dear admitted that she knowingly provided false information and supporting documents, including inflated business revenues and fabricated business information, to qualify applicants for PPP funds to which they were not entitled. Dear agreed to pay restitution of at least $435,415 as part of the plea agreement.

The guilty plea was announced as part of a nationwide fraud enforcement surge conducted from June 12 through September 1, 2026, and led by the U.S. Department of Justice's National Fraud Enforcement Division, the Small Business Administration, and the SBA Office of Inspector General. The operation involved 40 U.S. Attorney's Offices and 20 federal and state investigative agencies and resulted in fraud enforcement actions involving more than 160 criminal defendants, including approximately 80 newly charged defendants, representing approximately $245 million in intended losses. Amtrak Office of Inspector General agents participated in the enforcement effort through their work on the Dear investigation.

Dear is scheduled to be sentenced October 13, 2026. The offense carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, up to three years of supervised release, and a fine of up to $250,000.

More information about the nationwide enforcement surge is available in the U.S. Attorney's Office press release: https://direc.to/p4Hi.

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 via the Amtrak OIG Hotline at 1-800-468-5469 or online at https://direc.to/hPAu.

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