



LANL Former worker pleads guilty to embezzlement

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By ASSOCIATED PRESS

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A former Los Alamos National Laboratory worker accused of using bogus purchase orders to embezzle more than \$55,000 from the lab has pleaded guilty in the scheme.

Dolores Mae Arreola, a 26-year-old ex-purchasing officer, pleaded guilty in federal court Friday to one count of making false statements or entries, one count of theft or embezzlement of public money and one count of making a false, fictitious or fraudulent claim.

As part of her plea, Arreola agreed to forfeit two vehicles and \$20,000 she acquired through the scam.

"I recognize and accept responsibility for my criminal conduct," says the plea agreement signed by Arreola.

Arreola was fired from the lab in July 2005 after the embezzlement scheme was uncovered.

She faces up to 20 years in federal prison and hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines. The U.S. Attorney's Office, however, has agreed to recommend that Arreola be sentenced at the lowest end of the sentencing guideline range. A sentencing hearing has not been set.

According to the plea agreement:

Arreola used her position as a buyer for the lab to funnel money into a land grant association, which she served as president.

Arreola arranged for the Santo Domingo de Cundiyo Heirs Association to be recognized in the lab's procurement system as an authorized vendor.

She then stated that the association had been awarded contracts and purchase orders worth more than \$55,000 on three separate occasions -- none of which had anything to do with land grants. Arreola would deposit the checks made out to the land grant association in its bank account and then withdraw the money.

On the third occasion, however, lab officials discovered what had been occurring, and the bank froze the account.

The charges are similar to a procurement scandal five years ago that landed two other former lab employees behind bars.

Peter Bussolini and Scott Alexander were accused of illegally buying nearly

\$400,000 worth of hunting equipment, outdoor gear and TV sets on a lab account.

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