

Media Statement



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TO: ALL MEDIA

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RE: CLERK PLEADS GUILTY TO TEN YEAR FRAUD OF MORE THAN R13M

A 63-year-old clerk, Estelle Burgess pleaded guilty to 972 counts of fraud at the Port Elizabeth Specialised Commercial Crimes Court earlier this morning.

While employed at Eastern Cape Training Centre (ECT) in Port Elizabeth as a creditor's clerk between November 2004 to September 2014, she swindled ECT of R13.4 million.

Burgess's duties included capturing of payments due to suppliers or creditors and submitting captured payment lists for authorisation and payment.

ECT used an online internet payment system to pay creditors and as the Creditor's Clerk, Burgess assisted ECT's financial manager in making payments to the creditors. Only the two of them had access to ECT's banking system and she, among other duties, created spreadsheets which included the banking details of the creditors and the amounts that were due. Burgess presented these documents to the financial manager who would then authorise payments.

She had access to nine bank accounts from four different banks and some were under her name. Burgess fraudulently substituted the banking details of creditors and suppliers with her own.

As a result, R13 460 236.05 was paid into her nine bank accounts. The fraudulent transfers took place over ten years from November 2004 to September 2014. She was arrested by the Hawks in January 2019.

Advocate Ulrike De Klerk accepted the plea as it was in accordance to the charge sheet and the police docket.

The Magistrate, Nolitha Bara found Burgess guilty of 972 counts of fraud. Her case was postponed to 06 May 2021 for the correctional supervision and probation officer's reports.

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