

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF MAINE**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

AARON D. HOSTER

No. 1:23-cr-00082-JAW

REVISED PROSECUTION VERSION

The Scheme

Between about June 16, 2021 and April 24, 2023, at Home Depot and Lowes stores throughout Maine, the Defendant AARON D. HOSTER engaged in “ticket-switching,” where he would remove a Universal Product Code (UPC) from a relatively low-priced item and apply it over the UPC of a higher-priced item. Then, at the self-service checkout, the Defendant would scan the UPC of the low-priced item but depart the store with the high-priced item. The Defendant paid for these items using his debit/credit card. At both Lowes and Home Depot, the banking information entered via the debit/credit card in Maine was transferred to data servers outside the state of Maine for processing before being returned to the register in Maine.

For the purpose of executing this scheme and in furtherance of this scheme, the Defendant knowingly caused an interstate wire communication to be used for each of the transactions during the period of the scheme. In total, the scheme involved 160 such wires totaling \$51,269.61 in losses. Two of those wire communications are described below.

Count One

On August 11, 2022, in the District of Maine and elsewhere, the Defendant AARON D. HOSTER, knowingly devised, intended to devise, and participated in a scheme and artifice to defraud Home Depot, as to material matters, and to obtain money and property by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises, by knowingly transmitting and causing to be transmitted by means of wire communication in interstate commerce any writings, signs, signals and sounds for the purpose of executing such scheme and artifice.

Specifically, on this date, at the Home Depot in Topsham, Maine, for the purpose of executing the scheme to defraud described above, the Defendant scanned a UPC for a Dewalt .80 x 225 Ft Trimmer Line, valued at \$19.98, and paid electronically by using a debit card. The actual item purchased by the Defendant was a DeWalt 20 volt 16 gauge cordless finish nailer kit valued at \$439.00. As a result of the Defendant's use of his debit card to pay for the transaction, the Home Depot transmitted transaction information via point-of-sale terminals to locations out of state.

Count Two

On about March 13, 2023, in the District of Maine and elsewhere, the Defendant AARON D. HOSTER, knowingly attempted to devise, intended to devise, and participated in a scheme and artifice to defraud Home Depot, as to material matters, and to obtain money and property by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises, by knowingly transmitting and causing to be transmitted by means of wire communication in interstate commerce any writings, signs, signals and sounds for the purpose of executing such scheme and artifice.

Specifically, on this date, at the Home Depot in Waterville, Maine, for the purpose of executing the scheme to defraud described above, the Defendant scanned a UPC for an Oatey 1-1/4” chrome plated plastic tailpiece with sink drain stop and overflow plug, valued at \$11.36, and paid using a debit card. After paying for the item, the Defendant was confronted by store security. The Defendant abandoned his cart as he exited the store. The item he purchased was a Ridgid K-45 powered drain cleaner valued at \$429.00. As a result of the Defendant’s use of his debit card to pay for the transaction, the Home Depot transmitted transaction information via point-of-sale terminals to locations out of state.

Dated: September 8, 2023

DARCIE N. MCELWEE
United States Attorney

BY: /s/ ANDREW McCORMACK
ANDREW MCCORMACK
Assistant United States Attorney