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\$427,000 Missing; Former Mayetta Fire District Treasurer Accused

(KNZA)--The former treasurer of Mayetta Rural Fire District #1 has been charged in federal court, accused of embezzling more than \$427,000.

67-year-old Richard Bontrager, of Holton, was charged Tuesday with one count of embezzlement, with federal prosecutors alleging that the crimes took place from 2008 to 2013 while Bontrager managed the fire district's finances.

According to the office of U.S. Attorney Barry Grissom, Bontrager began embezzling funds in 2008 by issuing checks with forged signatures of members of the district's five member board of directors. The checks were made payable to a non-existent company in order to hide that they were being deposited into his personal account.

It's also alleged that Bontrager falsified loan documents to obligate the fire district to make monthly lease payments on a Polaris Ranger UTV and a 1988 Chevrolet truck.

To cover his tracks, authorities say he created false meeting minutes to make it appear that the fire district's board had approved the lease.

If convicted, Bontrager faces a maximum of 10 years in federal prison and a fine up to \$250,000.

The investigation into the alleged embezzlement was conducted by the Jackson County Sheriff's Department.

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