March 10, 2003

U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Eastern District of California
John K. Vincent
501 I Street, Suite 10-100
Sacramento, California Ê95814
Phone: (916) 554-2700
Fax: (916) 554-2900

Woman Convicted for Unauthorized Computer Access to Customer Account Information in Credit Union Fraud Prosecution

Fraudulent Transactions Totaled More than $53, 000

SACRAMENTO - United States Attorney John K. Vincent announced today that CHARMAINE NORTHERN, 23, of Sacramento, pleaded guilty to obtaining confidential customer account information and making fraudulent transactions, in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1030(a)(2)(A), and 1030(c)(2)(B)(i). NORTHERN's sentencing was set before Judge Edward J. Garcia for May 19, 2003 at 8:30 a.m. During the plea hearing, NORTHERN admitted that during the period from January 22, 2001 through October 26, 2002, while she was employed as a member service representative of Schools Federal Credit Union in Sacramento, California, she used the credit union computer to obtain customer account information, including names, social security and driver's license numbers and addresses, to open accounts in the names of others and incur unauthorized charges. Some of the credit card accounts were opened on the Internet. After the credit cards were established in the names of other customers, defendant NORTHERN used the credit cards to make numerous purchases. The estimated amount of the fraudulent transactions is approximately $53,376. According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark L. Krotoski, who is prosecuting the case, NORTHERN faces a maximum sentence of five years of incarceration; a fine of $250,000; and a three-year term of supervised release. As part of the plea agreement and during the plea hearing, NORTHERN acknowledged that she will be statutorily barred from employment at any federally insured financial institution for ten years following the date of conviction, pursuant to 12 U.S.C. § 1829(a). No financial institution customers lost any funds as a result of the offense; all customer funds were federally insured.

The case was investigated by the Sacramento Police Department with assistance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation Sacramento Office. A copy of this press release may be found on the U.S. Attorney's Office's website at:
http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/cae/text_version/text_pressindex.htm.

###