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Exec accused in try to sell movie theater equipment

Thursday, December 21, 2006

BY BILL SWAYZE
Star-Ledger Staff

An executive at Clearview Cinemas was charged with using company money to buy an \$8,900 theater sound system component and then hawking it on eBay, police said yesterday.

After John Hathaway, the company's vice president of facilities and real estate, posted the Dolby digital cinema sound processor on eBay earlier this month, another Clearview employee browsing the site came across the equipment and did a little investigating.

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Knowing that component be longs in a movie theater, not in someone's television room, the employee alerted corporate security and bid \$6,028 -- the winning bid, police said. Hathaway and the worker traded e-mails and he requested the purchaser make a money order payable to the Hatha way family restaurant in Newark, Cantina Do Lu, or his home, police said.

Police were contacted a week ago by Clearview corporate secu rity and were handed e-mails and paperwork for the processor purchase, police said.

Hathaway, 38, of Basking Ridge, was charged with attempted theft and fencing and is free on \$40,000 bail, authorities said.

"I don't know what motivated him to do it. He certainly exercised poor judgment," said Chatham police Detective Sgt. Michael Bochniak.

His attorney, Ravinder Bhalla of Hudson County, declined comment.

Clearview's spokeswoman, Beth Crimmins, said, "Hathaway no longer works for the company. We are conducting a thorough investigation into the matter," she said, declining further comment.

The sound processor, which is about the size of a big home stereo amplifier, is "the brains of a theater sound system. Without it, you'd have silent movies," said Gary Heckel, owner of Roberts Cinema in Chatham.

The one Hathaway allegedly tried to sell never traded hands and was being kept in a storage area, police said.

The Clearview company is based in Chatham and owns and operates 52 theaters in New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and Pennsylvania.

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