

She Was the Branch Manager At Wells Fargo. Prosecutors Say She Stole \$655,000 From Her Own Cash Vault.

Brooke McDonough allegedly used her trusted position at Wells Fargo to embezzle hundreds of thousands, then laundered the money through a Lexus dealership and a doctor's office



For eight months, Brooke McDonough walked into the Wells Fargo branch on McKellips Road and Stapley Road with the keys to the vault. She was the branch manager, responsible for safeguarding the money of customers.

But prosecutors say she was also running one of the more brazen bank embezzlement schemes they have seen.

According to an indictment McDonough, who was also known as Brooke Taylor, systematically looted approximately \$655,000 from Wells Fargo between June 2021 and February 2022. The charges against her include embezzlement by a bank

employee, six counts of money laundering, and five counts of structuring transactions to evade federal reporting requirements.

The case offers a window into insider fraud at banks, where employees with access to customer funds can get enticed into stealing that money.

The Shopping Spree With Customers Money

The indictment illustrates how she spent the money that she stole – cars and doctor bills and credit card payments to Citi.

On September 24, 2021, prosecutors say McDonough made a payment of \$71,131.40 to Superstition Springs Lexus. Four days earlier, on June 18, 2021, she allegedly sent \$11,635.28 to a company called Avant LLC. By June 25, she had reportedly paid \$34,266.29 to Honda, Inc.

The spending didn't stop there. Court documents show alleged payments to Upgrade Inc., Citibank for credit card bills, and even a \$37,112 payment to Dr. John J. Corey MD in April 2022.

All told, prosecutors say the money laundering charges alone cover more than \$175,000 in transactions.

How She Did It

What makes her scheme particularly notable is the apparent sophistication of her money laundering operation. As a bank branch manager she knew how to avoid detection.

Federal prosecutors say she made dozens of cash deposits at bank branches across the Phoenix metropolitan area, carefully keeping each transaction below the \$10,000 threshold that would trigger automatic currency transaction reports to federal authorities. Banks are required to file these reports under the Bank Secrecy Act, and deliberately structuring deposits to avoid them is a federal crime.

On a single day in June 2021, according to the indictment, McDonough allegedly made ten separate cash deposits at Wells Fargo and Chase bank branches in Mesa, totaling \$41,950. Each deposit was just under \$10,000, ranging from \$1,500 to \$5,000.

The pattern repeated throughout the summer of 2021. On June 23 and 24, prosecutors say she made 14 deposits totaling \$89,350. On July 29 and 30, another 12 deposits allegedly totaling \$61,913. By August 13, she had purportedly made six more deposits totaling \$29,950.

The indictment identifies five separate structuring episodes involving more than \$238,000 in deposits, all allegedly funneled into accounts at Chase Bank and Wells Fargo.

After Her Fraud She Took A Job At Another Bank

Perhaps the most alarming detail in the case emerged in pretrial hearings. After leaving Wells Fargo, McDonough took a job as a manager at another bank.

This fact prompted federal prosecutors to ask the court for an unusual pretrial release condition: requiring McDonough to inform her current employer and any future employer in financial services about the pending charges against her.

In court filings, Assistant U.S. Attorney Aron Ketchel argued that allowing McDonough to continue working in banking without disclosure would endanger the public. The government's memorandum noted that she "currently serves in the exact same position of trust (bank manager) that allowed her to engage in a brazen embezzlement scheme."

She Was Convicted Last Week

She was convicted by a jury on Thursday, December 11, 2025, after a two-week trial, of one count of embezzlement by bank employee, six counts of transactional money laundering, and five counts of structuring transactions to evade reporting requirements.

Case No. CR-24-00376-PHX-DJH, United States District Court for the District of Arizona.