



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott

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STATE CONTRACT BRIDGE INSPECTOR INDICTED FOR FORGED AND FALSIFIED SAFETY REVIEW

ALBANY - New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today announced the indictment of a State contract bridge inspector who falsified a safety inspection of a Hamilton County vehicular bridge over a creek in 2013.

Akram Ahmad, 57, of Bridgeport, CT., was indicted by a Hamilton County Grand Jury on charges of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, Forgery in the Second Degree and Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, felonies. The charges are based on an alleged falsified report Ahmad filed from a December 2013 inspection he purportedly performed on a bridge over the Elbow Creek in the Town of Wells, Hamilton County.

"This defendant, charged with ensuring the safety of critical infrastructure, engaged in criminal conduct which compromised the integrity of New York State's bridge repair and inspection process," said Inspector General Leahy Scott. "I will pursue anyone who abdicates their responsibilities as a State employee or contractor, especially when the public's safety is placed at risk."

An investigation by Inspector General Leahy Scott found that Ahmad, an employee of a Capital Region engineering firm acting as subcontractor to conduct bridge inspections for the New York State Department of Transportation ("NYSDOT"), inspected the Gilmantown Road bridge in late 2013. The bridge was previously inspected in 2012 when it was found to have various deficiencies. In particular, the 2012 inspection found erosion along a wing wall under the bridge and a "yellow flag" was issued indicating a warning for the bridge but not a "critical" condition.

The deficiencies in the 2012 inspection report were repaired in September 2013, but Ahmad's subsequent inspection report of the same bridge three months after the repairs were made noted the same deficiencies and used much of the same language as the 2012 report, seemingly copied directly from it. A town official at the time doubted an inspection could have been conducted in late 2013 due to ice and snow at the site. The NYSDOT was able to perform an inspection in early 2014 after the snow and ice cleared and found the repairs had been made and that the deficiencies Ahmad cited in his 2013 inspection report did not exist.

The NYSDOT is responsible for inspecting approximately 17,000 bridges across the State and often contracts the inspection work to various private engineering firms. At the time of inspections related to the Hamilton County Bridge at issue in this case, Ahmad worked for DKI Engineering, a Capital Region company subcontracted for NYSDOT inspections work.

Ahmad was arraigned today in Hamilton County Court and released pending further court action.

Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked the NYSDOT and the United States Department of Transportation for their assistance with the investigation, the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office for their assistance with the arrest and Hamilton County District Attorney Marsha King Purdue for prosecuting this matter.

The defendant is considered innocent until and unless proven guilty in a court of law.

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