



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Workers' Compensation Fraud Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott

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BUFFALO MAN STOLE DECEASED WOMAN'S WORKERS' COMPENSATION BENEFITS

ALBANY – New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today announced the arrest of a City of Buffalo man who stole nearly \$10,000 in Workers' Compensation benefits meant for the woman he previously lived with and cared for but who had actually passed away two years earlier.

Michael Barton, 57, of Buffalo, was charged today with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a felony.

An investigation by Inspector General Leahy Scott found that Barton and an accomplice regularly cashed Workers' Compensation benefit checks belonging to the woman he lived with and who passed away in July 2012. Nonetheless, Barton and his accomplice continued cashing her checks through September of 2014 as if she were still alive. Workers' Compensation benefits are meant to cease upon the death of a recipient.

In total, Barton and his accomplice defrauded the Workers' Compensation system by stealing \$9,953 in benefits to which they were not entitled. The investigation is continuing.

“For two years this defendant engaged in a morbid and shameful fraud enriching himself with nearly \$10,000 in benefits to which he was not entitled,” said Inspector General Leahy Scott. “I will dedicate the resources of my office to protect a benefits program meant to assist honest, hard-working New Yorkers.”

Barton was arraigned in Buffalo City Court and is due back in court on February 27th.

Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked the New York State Police for their assistance with the arrest, and Erie County District Attorney John J. Flynn and his office for prosecuting this matter.

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

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The New York State Office of the Workers' Compensation Fraud Inspector General investigates fraud, abuse and/or illegal acts against the New York State Workers' Compensation system, including fraud by medical service providers, employers seeking to evade appropriate Workers' Compensation charges, and employees who fabricate injuries to fraudulently receive system benefits. Complaints and referrals are kept confidential. We can be reached by calling toll free: 1-800-367-4448, utilizing our online complaint form at <http://www.ig.ny.gov> or sending an email to: inspector.general@ig.ny.gov. You also can write to our office at: Office of the Workers' Compensation Fraud Inspector General, Empire State Plaza, Agency Building 2, 16th Floor, Albany, New York 12223