



NEWS RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 6, 2019
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WATERFORD MECHANIC CHARGED WITH DEFRAUDING WORKERS' COMPENSATION BY WORKING AT A SELKIRK USED CAR DEALERSHIP WHILE CLAIMING HE WAS NOT EMPLOYED

ALBANY – New York State Workers' Compensation Fraud Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today announced the arrest of a Waterford mechanic on charges that he defrauded the Workers' Compensation system and stole benefits to which he was not entitled by claiming he was not working due to an injury when he was actually working for a used car dealership in Selkirk and getting paid off the books.

Lawrence Bunting, 50, of Waterford, was arrested and arraigned today in the Town of Malta Justice Court on the charges of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, Insurance Fraud in the Third Degree, and two counts of the Workers' Compensation crime of Fraudulent Practices, all felonies.

An investigation by Workers' Compensation Fraud Inspector General Leahy Scott found that Bunting reported a work-related injury in January 2015 at the trucking company where he was employed as a mechanic and shortly thereafter stopped working and began receiving Workers' Compensation disability benefits. While out on leave and receiving benefits, Bunting submitted a medical intake questionnaire in which he indicated he has not been working in any capacity and repeatedly told his doctor that he was not working. However, the investigation determined that Bunting was working in Selkirk for a used car dealership that bought and sold vehicles for scrap. While receiving Workers' Compensation disability benefits, Bunting worked for months for up to eight hours a day performing tasks which included performing maintenance work on cars, working with tools, loading trucks with machinery, replacing tires on vehicles, operating a front loader to move cars and place cars on trailers, and using a winching system to secure cars to trailers.

“This defendant is charged with a deliberate abuse of a benefits program meant to assist honest and hard-working New Yorkers who become disabled through a work-related injury,” said Inspector General Leahy Scott. “My office will continue to dedicate necessary resources to protect the integrity of the state's vital Workers' Compensation system and pursue anyone who takes advantage of it.”

Under State law, employers are required to maintain Workers' Compensation coverage for their employees, and employees are expected to provide truthful information regarding their work activity to insurance carriers and the Workers' Compensation Board during the time they are receiving benefits.

Bunting was arraigned on the charges today in the Town of Malta Justice Court and released on his own recognizance pending his reappearance in court on March 6, 2019.

Workers' Compensation Fraud Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked the New York State Police for their assistance with the arrest and Saratoga County District Attorney Karen A. Heggen and her office for prosecuting this matter.

The charges are merely allegations and 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