



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Acting Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
January 31, 2013

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DMV SUPERVISOR ARRESTED FOR REMOVING IGNITION INTERLOCK RESTRICTIONS ON PERSON'S DRIVER'S LICENSE Restrictions Had Been Court-Ordered Upon DWI Conviction

Acting State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott announced the arrest of a New York State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) employee who allegedly removed the ignition interlock restriction from another individual's driver's license after that individual was convicted for driving while intoxicated. Drivers with the interlock restriction are required to breathe into an ignition interlock device, which is similar to a breathalyzer, to ensure they are not intoxicated before driving their car.

Sherri Freitas, 43, of Ravena, is charged with two counts of Tampering with Public Records in the First Degree, a class D felony; two counts of Computer Trespass, a class E felony; two counts of Computer Tampering in the Third Degree, a class E felony; and three counts of Official Misconduct, a misdemeanor. Freitas was arraigned today in Albany City Court before the Hon. William Carter and released on her own recognizance.

"By changing the DMV restriction levels, the defendant not only exceeded her authority as a DMV employee but potentially compromised public safety. These actions revealed a serious lapse in oversight that DMV has since corrected," said Acting Inspector General Scott. "Thankfully this misconduct was uncovered before anyone was harmed."

On two separate occasions, Freitas allegedly accessed the DMV computer network files pertaining to an individual known to her and removed the ignition interlock restriction from that individual's DMV record. Freitas did not have authority to access the DMV records in this manner. Freitas also did not have authority to alter the DMV records to remove ignition interlock restrictions.

DMV Commissioner Barbara J. Fiala said: "The employee will be suspended and will not be able to access any DMV records. Those who attempt to alter the driving records of any motorist, for any reason, have violated the law and will be discovered and prosecuted. I congratulate the DMV staff on discovering this alleged abuse and the Acting Inspector General for her successful investigation."

In addition, Freitas allegedly sent an unauthorized letter on DMV letterhead to an attorney representing the individual upon whom the restrictions had been placed regarding the removal of the interlock restriction from that individual's DMV record. The investigation revealed that Freitas signed the letter as DMV supervisor, making the letter appear as if her representations were an official opinion of DMV when in fact they were not.

Freitas, a DMV employee of 25 years, is a supervisor assigned to the Driver Improvement Unit.

Acting Inspector General Scott thanked the New York State Police for their assistance in the case and the Albany County District Attorney's Office for the prosecution of this matter. The defendant is innocent until and unless proven guilty in a court of law. This case has been adjourned to February 4, 2013.

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