



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott

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NEW YORK STATE INSPECTOR GENERAL FINDS VIOLATION OF VEHICLE USE POLICY AT NYS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND COMMUNITY SUPERVISION

*Vehicles were inappropriately used for commuting,
logging a million miles between 2009 and 2010*

New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott has completed an [investigation](#) which found the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), without justification and contrary to state policy, gave permission to 64 correctional facility superintendents and 16 other staff members to utilize vehicles essentially for commuting to and from their jobs. The investigation found that between 2009 and 2010, a million miles collectively was reported for commuting in the vehicles. As a result of the Inspector General's findings and recommendations, DOCCS has taken a number of significant steps including a directive that superintendents, executive staff and regional directors would no longer be assigned vehicles, and that all vehicles be returned to the agency vehicle pool.

The Inspector General recognizes the safety and security of New York State's correctional system cannot be compromised, and that emergencies occur in correctional facilities which require an immediate and effective response by DOCCS. However, the Inspector General's investigation found scant evidence that the assignment of vehicles to superintendents and agency executives assist such responses, as emergencies are responded to by watch commanders, on-line supervisors, sergeants and others. Vehicles will continue to be assigned to these first responders to ensure security at the state's correctional facilities.

"My investigation found no justification for the assignment of vehicles to DOCCS officials and employees who were not the first line of defense against emergencies at our correctional facilities," said Inspector General Scott. "The use of these vehicles for commuting and non-business purposes was a waste of taxpayer dollars that should never have been sanctioned."

In 2009, a directive was issued to each agency and authority eliminating the practice of dedicating vehicles to specific individuals, except in extraordinary circumstances. Subsequently, the Division of Budget disseminated an updated policy on state vehicle usage and assignment, which included new provisions addressing in particular the assignment and personal use of state vehicles. The Inspector General's investigation found that this directive and policy was not followed by DOCCS, which failed to implement the mandated agency analysis and changes.

The Inspector General conducted a review of DOCCS vehicle usage and found that between 2009 and 2010, a million miles collectively was reported for commuting in the vehicles. Additionally, about a fourth of those using vehicles transported friends and family, and otherwise engaged in non-business related travel.

The Inspector General also investigated the DOCCS staff attendance at a June 2011 retirement party for a superintendent in western New York. The Inspector General's review found lack of understanding among DOCCS officials of what could be appropriately charged to the state. Of the 24 party attendees who were

interviewed by the Inspector General, 16 used a state vehicle to travel to and from the party. In addition, 14 of those attendees charged the state for an overnight stay, claiming that they had state business to conduct nearby.

Inspector General Scott shared the findings and recommendations of her investigation with DOCCS, and assisted DOCCS in formulating corrective action. DOCCS advised the Inspector General that it accepted her recommendations, has completed an analysis of DOCCS vehicle usage, and has taken significant actions to address the issues identified in the Inspector General's report, including:

- The issuance of a new directive advising executive staff, regional directors, and superintendents that they would no longer be assigned vehicles, and that all vehicles must be returned to the agency vehicle pool;
- The issuance of a new directive advising that agency vehicles may not be used to attend social events such as retirement parties;
- The issuance of a new policy stating that agency officials with assigned vehicles must log and report for tax purposes all non-business related travel;
- An update of its vehicle log and reporting procedures to record commuter usage. DOCCS also expanded its internal compliance unit to review and audit vehicle usage and commercial gas credit card charges to ensure adherence with agency and State policy;
- The training of appropriate staff on budget directives, fiscal control and accountability, and vehicle usage policy; and
- A review of the conduct of specific employees with regard to the improper personal use of agency vehicles and is pursuing action as warranted.

Click [here](#) for a copy of the report.

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