



NEWS

From the Office of the New York State Inspector General
Joseph Fisch

Contact: Kate Gurnett
(518) 474-1010
kate.gurnett@ig.state.ny.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 10, 2009
[View Report](#)

DOT OVERSIGHT LAPSE FOUND IN \$6,800 THEFT OF CELL PHONES, REPORT CONCLUDES

A report by New York State Inspector General Joseph Fisch concludes that poor oversight by the state Department of Transportation (DOT) allowed Senior Mail and Supply Clerk Jose Correa to buy at least \$6,800 in unauthorized cell phones prior to his arrest last year.

According to a report released today, Correa, 37, of Albany, was given sole responsibility to order and distribute \$1.4 million worth of DOT cell phones per year. But Correa fraudulently ordered and stole dozens of extra phones to sell on the Internet, officials said, pocketing the profits. Correa resigned his DOT position after his arrest and faces prosecution in Albany County.

The Inspector General determined that DOT improperly managed agency cell phones, paying for 400 phones with no idea of who was using them. Lax record keeping also made it impossible to determine the full extent of Correa's fraud, according to the report.

"It is outrageous and unconscionable in these times of economic hardship to find such a lack of basic supervision," Inspector General Joseph Fisch said. "This was not some sophisticated scheme. This was an employee given free reign to order these cell phones and an invitation for fraud."

The Inspector General also found that Correa failed to disclose a prior criminal conviction when he applied for his state job in 1993 and that DOT was unaware of a second conviction in 1997.

As a result of the Correa case, DOT launched a cell phone audit, cancelling about 400 phone lines at an annual savings of \$142,000, and locating other cuts expected to save DOT \$375,000 a year, according to the Inspector General's report.

###