



NEWS RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 19, 2016
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NIAGARA FALLS WOMAN CHARGED WITH FORGING DECEASED MOTHER'S SIGNATURE TO CASH IN ON DECEASED STEPFATHER'S DEATH BENEFITS

ALBANY – New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today announced the arrest of a Niagara Falls woman on charges she defrauded the Workers' Compensation system by forging her recently-deceased mother's name on benefit checks the mother had been receiving since the work-related death of the mother's husband 19 years earlier.

Virginia Donahue, 57, of 81st Street, Niagara Falls, was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, and five counts of Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, all felonies.

An investigation by Inspector General Leahy Scott found that Donahue's mother began receiving her deceased husband's Workers' Compensation benefits after his death in 1997. Her husband passed away due to long-term illness suffered while working at Union Carbide Corporation. Donahue's mother subsequently passed away in October of 2014, but the Worker's Compensation benefits checks the mother had been receiving as a result of her husband's death kept coming. Between December of 2014 and January of 2015, Donahue forged her deceased mother's name on the biweekly Workers' Compensation checks and deposited them into her own account for her own use. In total, Donohue stole \$1,113 in benefits to which she was not entitled.

“Through a morbid and shameful identity fraud, this defendant enriched herself with a brazen theft of benefits to which she was not entitled,” said Inspector General Leahy Scott. “I will continue dedicating the resources of my position and office to protect the benefits meant to assist honest, hard-working New Yorkers.”

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.

Donahue was arraigned in Niagara Falls City Court and released with a return to court date of Jan. 18, 2017.

Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked the New York Special Funds Conservation Committee for their assistance with the investigation, the New York State Police for their assistance with the arrest and the office of the Niagara County District Attorney 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