



NEWS RELEASE

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

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NIAGARA FALLS WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FORGING DECEASED MOTHER'S SIGNATURE TO GET DECEASED STEPFATHER'S DEATH BENEFITS

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

Virginia Donahue, 58, of Niagara Falls, pleaded guilty today in Niagara Falls City Court to Attempted Petit Larceny and paid full restitution of \$1,113.80.

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 a long-term work related illness. Under State law, if a covered worker dies from a compensable injury, the surviving spouse and/or other dependents are entitled to weekly cash benefits. Donohue was not a dependent of her mother's deceased husband.

Donahue's mother subsequently passed away in October of 2014, but the Workers' Compensation benefits checks the mother had been receiving as a result of her husband's death kept coming. Between November 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.

"This defendant's shameful fraud enabled her to steal benefits to which she was not entitled," said Inspector General Leahy Scott. "I will continue using the resources of my office to protect the benefits meant to help honest, hard-working New Yorkers."

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 Niagara County District Attorney Caroline A. Wojtaszek and her office for prosecuting this matter.

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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