



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott

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NEW YORK STATE INSPECTOR GENERAL RECEIVES HONORS FOR INVESTIGATION OF COMMERCIAL DRIVER LICENSE TEST CHEATING SCANDAL

New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott announced her office is the recipient of the 2014 Public Service Excellence Award conferred by the New York State Academy for Public Administration (SAPA). SAPA recognized the Inspector General and her team of investigators, auditors and attorneys who investigated a test cheating scandal at the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). As a result of the investigation, members of the cheating ring were arrested and prosecuted – and DMV improved its written test taking system for the New York State Commercial Driver License (CDL) to ensure this type of scheme cannot occur in the future.

“With great dedication and determination, a team of 16 highly experienced investigators, auditors and attorneys launched an investigation in March 2013 that is ongoing,” said Inspector General Scott. “This investigation culminated in the arrest and prosecution of a total of 40 defendants thus far. These individuals were charged with being a part of an organized test cheating scandal that put unqualified drivers behind the wheels of such vehicles as school buses and hazardous material transport trucks. A critically important result of this investigation – along with ensuring that unqualified drivers stay off New York’s highways – is that DMV has improved its system to protect it from fraud.”

The investigation was conducted in cooperation with state, federal and New York City investigatory agencies. It uncovered a complex test-taking for cash scheme, where individuals seeking to pass the written portion of the CDL test allegedly paid ringleaders who themselves allegedly paid others to fill in the blank tests for the test takers. The investigation resulted in evidence which showed that CDL tests – which were sheets of paper containing the list of questions – were removed from the secure testing area at DMV offices located in New York City by individuals who allegedly bribed security personnel contracted by DMV. The security personnel, who were later arrested, were found to have either deliberately ignored the fact that the tests were removed or in some cases removed the tests from the testing site themselves.

The NYSIG investigation team found that test takers were willing to pay from \$1500 to \$4500 to secure the answers to the test. This scheme was made all the more easy by the DMV’s use of an outdated paper testing system.

In this investigation, the team worked directly with the legal and administrative staff at DMV to identify vulnerabilities in the CDL testing administration process. As a result, DMV has strengthened test room procedures in all DMV offices across New York State. DMV has also commenced the utilization of computerized test stations to eliminate the paper tests that were the focus of the investigation. The corrective measures taken by DMV has resulted in a more comprehensive CDL test taking process; assurances that those who hold a CDL have validly received such licenses; and, most importantly, safer streets and highways.

The SAPA Public Service Excellence Awards was held at Rockefeller College of Public Affairs in Albany on May 21, 2014. SAPA recognizes individuals or teams who have served as a model for public servants, made significant improvement to the organization and/or its services, changed the way the organization operates to better achieve its goals or deliver better service, and/or achieve substantial financial savings.

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