



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott

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NEW YORK STATE INSPECTOR GENERAL: AGENCY TIGHTENS INTERNAL CONTROLS IN WAKE OF INVESTIGATION WHICH FOUND SUPERVISOR MADE AT LEAST \$2,000 SELLING STATE OWNED SCRAP METAL

*Report referred to Joint Commission on Public Ethics
and Columbia County District Attorney*

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) has strengthened supervision of employees and tightened internal controls of agency materials in the wake of New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott's investigation which found that an OCFS supervisor made \$2,000 by illegally selling the agency's scrap metal.

"As a result of my investigation, OCFS has adopted a comprehensive inventory of scrap materials – which are state owned assets that have a real dollar value," said Inspector General Scott. "Our investigation found that an individual responsible for supervising others was able to benefit from the unauthorized proceeds of state property, or direct his subordinates to do the same. As this case demonstrates, unscrupulous employees will engage in such behavior if agencies do not take proper inventory of their assets and effectively supervise their employees."

Inspector General Scott's investigation revealed that John Onufrychuk, a maintenance supervisor who worked at the Brookwood Secure Center (Brookwood), an OCFS facility in Claverack, sold or directed subordinate employees to sell 36 loads of scrap metal to a salvage company in Catskill between April 2009 and December 2011. Additionally, the investigation found that state vehicles were used to transport the scrap.

The Inspector General further found Brookwood management failed to properly supervise Onufrychuk and that OCFS and Brookwood failed to enforce compliance with property inventory and disposal policies.

Onufrychuk, 62, of Hudson was suspended by OCFS in December 2011. During the pending disciplinary proceedings, he retired in March 2013. Onufrychuk was employed by OCFS for 27 years at the Brookwood Secure Center in Claverack. Brookwood houses violent juvenile offenders and violent juvenile delinquents.

Inspector General Scott recommended that Brookwood conduct a full property inventory in conformance with agency policy and that OCFS ensure that all agency facilities are conforming to agency policy. Additionally, Inspector General Scott recommended that Brookwood train and better supervise its employees to ensure all property, including scrap, is secure. OCFS and Brookwood have agreed with – and are implementing – the Inspector General's recommendations.

As a result of the Inspector General's investigation, OCFS has adopted several measures that will

strengthen controls over agency assets, including scrap materials. These steps include:

- A requirement that all facilities receive written approval from agency management before scrap materials are disposed of;
- Ongoing training and education of staff on new scrap management and disposal procedures;
- An agency-wide comprehensive review of inventory management and internal control practices;
- A comprehensive agency-wide inventory of state-owned assets;
- Developing an inventory tracking database of all agency assets;
- Directing the OCFS Audit and Control unit to increase its internal audit activity to verify agency-wide compliance with inventory procedures; and
- Ensuring the OCFS internal control officer will be responsible for conducting regular testing of the inventory system.

Additionally, as a result of the Inspector General's investigation, Brookwood has relocated scrap materials inside the facility's fenced in area to improve security. Employees have been instructed that they are no longer permitted to transport scrap to a salvage company; all materials will be collected on-site by a vendor under direct supervision of a facility manager and they will be inventoried on a monthly basis. Brookwood will document all disposal of scrap materials.

Inspector General Scott referred her findings to the New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE) and the Columbia County District Attorney's Office.

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