



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott

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STATE GROUP HOME MAINTENANCE WORKER REMOVED BUILDING PARTS FROM FACILITIES HE WORKED IN AND SOLD AS SCRAP

ROCHESTER – New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today announced the arrest of a maintenance assistant for the State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) on charges that he removed and sold as scrap some building parts from OPWDD Finger Lakes Region group homes he was charged with maintaining, and sometimes replaced what was removed with less expensive materials.

Joseph L. Wahl, 39, of Selborne Chase, Fairport, was charged with three counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a felony, and one count of Official Misconduct, a misdemeanor.

An investigation by Inspector General Leahy Scott found that between January of 2014 and June of 2016, Wahl, an OPWDD maintenance assistant, on numerous occasions removed various building parts, including copper piping, steel and electric wiring, from OPWDD group homes. Wahl, while on State time and using a State van, transported and sold the materials to a recycling business as if they were scrap. The investigation revealed that Wahl received over \$2,000.00 for the materials he stole from the group homes. In some instances, the investigation found, Wahl went so far as to replace copper pipe plumbing he removed and sold as scrap with far less expensive PVC plastic pipes that he installed himself.

“This defendant methodically and repeatedly dismantled parts of the group homes he was paid to maintain and while on State time and using State resources he sold the materials as scrap,” said Inspector General Leahy Scott. “His actions violated the public trust and I will use my office to vigorously pursue anyone who abuses taxpayers’ resources.”

Wahl was assigned to the OPWDD Finger Lakes Regional Office in Brighton. Wahl has worked performing maintenance duties on OPWDD group homes throughout the Finger Lakes Region.

Wahl was issued an appearance ticket for December 14 in Brighton Town Court.

Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked the New York State Police for their assistance with the arrest and Monroe County District Attorney Sandra Doorley and her office for prosecuting this matter.

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