



NEWS RELEASE

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

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STATE EMPLOYEE WITH SIDE BUSINESS AND OUTSIDE JOBS CHARGED WITH SIX-FIGURE WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND WELFARE FRAUD

NEW CITY - New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott and Acting Rockland County District Attorney Kevin Gilleece today announced the arrest of a State employee with a side taxi business and outside jobs in local municipalities on charges he engaged in several fraudulent activities enabling his theft of more than \$100,000 in Workers' Compensation benefits and Medicaid payments.

Raphael Ziegler, 41, of Monsey, who is currently employed as a Fire Protection Specialist with the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, was arrested and charged today with Grand Larceny in the Second and Third Degrees, Insurance Fraud in the Third Degree, two counts of Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree, and the two counts each of the Workers Compensation crimes of Failure to Secure Compensation and Fraudulent Practices, all felonies.

The charges allege Ziegler worked several side jobs and a side business while out from his State job on Workers' Compensation disability leave, and that the Medicaid taxi transportation business he began the day he first went out on leave was operated illegally as it failed to provide Workers' Compensation benefits for its employees. As such, the taxi company, Emunah Transportation, was not eligible to provide Medicaid transportation services for which it was paid more than \$77,000 from March 2016 through June 2018.

"These charges lay out this defendant's myriad schemes to conceal and defraud his way to six-figures in ill-gotten gains," said **Inspector General Leahy Scott**. "The Workers' Compensation and Medicaid systems are both critical safety nets in our State, and any theft from or abuse of those programs will not be tolerated."

"As a safety and law enforcement officer for both New York State and the Village of New Hempstead, Mr. Ziegler's behavior is particularly egregious," said **Acting Rockland County District Attorney Gilleece**. "Claims like those filed in this case take money from the pockets of all New Yorkers. Moreover, insurance fraud casts doubt on those who actually need the benefits."

An investigation by Inspector General Leahy Scott found that Ziegler, while previously employed at the State's Rockland Psychiatric Center as a Safety and Security Officer, suffered a work-related injury there on March 20, 2016. For that reported injury, Ziegler went out on Workers' Compensation leave though late June, and then again from mid-July through mid-December 2016. During each of those absences, Ziegler attended several Workers' Compensation medical examinations, each time asserting he was not working in any capacity while out on leave collecting benefits. The investigation, however, determined Ziegler held several jobs while out on leave from his State job, including a part-time position as Village of New Hempstead Code Enforcement Officer, as a hazmat instructor for the Rockland County Emergency Services, and running and driving for his

taxi business, Emunah Transportation. During his leave, Ziegler also responded to 44 emergency calls as a member of the Monsey Fire Department. In total, the charges allege Ziegler received more than \$24,000 in Workers' Compensation benefit payments to which he was not entitled.

Additionally, Ziegler owned the Emunah Transportation taxi company throughout this period and began accepting Medicaid payments for medical transportation rides the day he first went out on his disability leave in 2016. From then through the summer of 2018, Ziegler's taxi company employed between 14 and 22 people but never provided any of them with Workers' Compensation coverage, a requirement under State law and a prerequisite to billing Medicaid for transportation services. During that period, Ziegler received \$77,325 in Medicaid payments to which he was not entitled.

Ziegler was arraigned on the charges in the Town of Ramapo Court and released on his own recognizance pending his reappearance in court on March 28, 2019.

Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked Acting Rockland County District Attorney Kevin Gilleece and his office for their assistance with the arrest and for prosecuting this case.

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