



NEWS

From the Office of the New York State Inspector General
Joseph Fisch

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[SLA Report/DEC Report](#)

Inspector General Criticizes Personal Use of State Vehicles

New York State Inspector General Joseph Fisch today criticized two state agencies for sanctioning personal use of official vehicles at a cost to the state of thousands of dollars a year.

The Inspector General found that the State Liquor Authority (SLA) allowed employees to commute up to 600 miles round-trip in state vehicles, costing taxpayers at least \$20,000 a year in gas alone. In a separate report, the Inspector General revealed that the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) spent \$1,600 a year from 2001 to 2006 for an administrative assistant to commute in a state vehicle.

"Taxpayers shouldn't foot the bill for extensive commuting," Fisch said. "Use of state vehicles must be in the best interest of the state and should never be regarded as a personal perk."

The Inspector General's Office reviewed SLA vehicle use and found employees who commuted in state cars despite an agency prohibition. They routinely failed to fill out required travel logs, odometer readings and destinations. For example:

- Former Assistant Director of Enforcement Peter Person used a state car to commute on weekends from his Manhattan office to his Essex County home, a 600-mile roundtrip at public expense. On weekdays, Person drove the state's Chevy Impala to a relative's Long Island residence, racking up more than 56,000 miles in 2008. Person's travel logs were plagued with errors, with mileage that did not correspond to his stated destination. That same year, the Inspector General had reported that SLA improperly paid Person's boss, Director of Enforcement Daniel Malay, \$29,000 for commuting to Albany from his Onondaga County home.
- SLA Chairman Daniel Boyle commuted in his assigned state car but ignored warnings from SLA General Counsel Thomas Donohue and a memorandum from the Governor's office that he was required to report his commuting mileage as taxable income. Boyle argued that he didn't need to do so because he was

“always working on the agency’s behalf” even when commuting. And, despite the repeated warnings, he told the Inspector General that he was never given “clear guidance” on vehicle use. Personal use of an employer-owned vehicle is generally considered income to be reported on an employee’s W-2 form.

- An SLA New York City investigator used a state car to commute from her Albany-area home, logging more than 41,000 miles in 2008, as the state paid \$5,500 for gas.

Inspector General Fisch recommended that SLA restrict long-distance commutes and eliminate the exclusive use of state vehicles for personal commuting.

In a separate report, the Inspector General revealed that DEC Administrative Assistant Leslie Woolsey violated agency policy by commuting to work 900 miles each month in a state vehicle, at an annual cost to the state of \$1,600 in gas and E-ZPass tolls.

Woolsey was granted use of a state vehicle along with other employees after Sept. 11, 2001 to work with law enforcement and DEC staffers in the wake of the World Trade Center attacks. However, Woolsey kept her vehicle and continued to drive it from her Staten Island home to her Long Island City workstation until 2006, even though her work schedule had returned to normal. Woolsey also submitted incomplete mileage reports and failed to report the value of her perk on her W-2 form.

Woolsey’s supervisors, former Regional Operations Supervisor Gary St. Clair and his successor, Robert McDonald, were aware of Woolsey’s actions and allowed them to continue, the report finds.

The Inspector General is forwarding the DEC and SLA reports to the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance for review of the unclaimed fringe benefits. In response to the reports, both agencies concurred with the Inspector General's findings and agreed to tighten vehicle control and ensure that employees comply with vehicle-use policies.

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