



# NEWS

From the Office of the New York State Inspector General  
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## **Inspector General Finds Serious Misconduct at the Trace Evidence Section of the State Police Forensic Lab**

An investigation by Inspector General Joseph Fisch into the Trace Evidence Section of the New York State Police Forensic Investigation Center found that Forensic Scientist Garry Veeder routinely failed to conduct a required test and “dry-labbed” by fraudulently presenting results without actually performing the tests. This misconduct prompted an examination of Veeder’s 322 cases by outside forensic scientists which revealed a 29% deficiency rate. As a result, 44 district attorneys statewide were notified to review criminal cases which were based in any way on Veeder’s findings, including homicides, assaults and robberies.

The Inspector General also found that Veeder’s misconduct escaped detection for years due to shoddy supervision. Once Veeder’s errors were exposed, State Police supervisors dismissed Veeder’s assertions that his conduct resulted from poor training and supervision. Lab supervisors instead wrongly focused on Veeder alone when, in fact, the Inspector General found that Veeder’s assertions were substantially true.

The Inspector General’s 120-page report reveals that Veeder’s supervisor and trainer, Anthony Piscitelli, did not require staff to perform the required fiber test which Veeder skipped and also approved some of Veeder’s deficient work. R. Michael Portzer, the scientist who reviewed Veeder’s work, was unqualified to do so as he had been officially disqualified from conducting fiber tests himself due to lack of competence. Veeder, 58, committed suicide in May 2008 during the Forensic Investigation Center’s inquiry.

“Cutting corners in a crime lab is serious and intolerable,” Inspector General Joseph Fisch said. “Forensic laboratories must adhere to the highest standards of competence, independence and integrity. Anything less undermines public confidence in our criminal justice system.”

The Inspector General found another case of misconduct related to the trace section of the lab. Major Richard Nuzzo, then Assistant Director of the Forensic Investigation Center, violated State Police ethical prohibitions by attempting to influence a scientist’s handwriting analysis in a case Nuzzo’s brother was investigating, the report states. Given Nuzzo’s conduct, the Inspector General recommended that State Police officers recuse themselves from cases if they have a personal stake in the matter.

State Police called the violations “an alarming departure” and, based on the Inspector General’s findings, agreed to hire an outside expert to conduct a full audit of the Forensic Investigation Center’s quality assurance processes.

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