



NEWS RELEASE

Office of the Inspector General Ellen Biben

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State Agencies, Authorities Vulnerable to Theft and Abuse Of Gasoline Supplies without Improved Safeguards

New York State Inspector General Ellen Biben announced today findings from a new investigative report showing the systems for fueling state vehicles and motorized equipment are ripe for theft and abuse.

Inadequate controls on state-operated fuel pumps, along with inconsistent policies on the use and distribution of gasoline credit cards, were found in the Inspector General's review of 12 state agencies and authorities including the State Police, Office of General Services and the state prison system.

"Without adequate safeguards and effective monitoring, the State cannot properly account for all of the tens of millions of dollars spent annually to fuel state vehicles and other equipment," said Inspector General Ellen Biben. "Many New Yorkers are struggling through the summer travel season with today's high fuel costs. As taxpayers, they also deserve government doing everything possible to reduce costs by preventing theft and abuse of the State's fuel supply."

In 2010 alone, state entities spent in excess of \$69 million on fuel for vehicles and equipment.

The Inspector General found a wide variety of policies and practices carried out by different agencies and authorities, and even some dramatic and disturbing inconsistencies within the same state agency or authority.

The Inspector General found:

- unlocked pumps at unstaffed fueling sites with no identification needed to obtain fuel;
- at some manual pump facilities, there is no limit on the amount of gas that can be dispensed at one time;
- a number of facilities do not review fuel transactions at all.

The Inspector General's office has investigated cases involving the theft of gasoline from fueling stations maintained by state agencies and public authorities. In 2009, one investigation found a highway maintenance supervisor had stolen 42 percent of the fuel dispensed from a single pump operated by the entity. More recently, a worker in the state's Highway Emergency Local Patrol (HELP) program was found to be falsely claiming to have provided fuel or assistance to motorists on Long Island while instead using the fuel for his own personal vehicle.

Inspector General Biben is recommending the use of electronic control systems that link personal and vehicle identification numbers with fuel usage. The report also proposed upgrades to fuel-dispensing controls; for purchases with commercial gasoline credit cards (at no additional cost to the state); implementation of enhanced monitoring standards, including the tracking of fuel usage by vehicle; and new controls for the use of gasoline credit cards issued by the state Office of General Services.

A copy of the Inspector General's report is available online at www.ig.state.ny.us/reports.html.

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