

# Department of Justice

United States Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr.  
Western District of New York

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CONTACT: BARBARA BURNS  
PHONE: (716) 843-5817  
FAX: (716) 551-3051

## **FORMER POLICE OFFICER PLEADS GUILTY TO MAIL FRAUD**

BUFFALO, N.Y. - U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that former Buffalo Police Officer Johnnie Fritz, 49, of Buffalo, N.Y. pleaded guilty to mail fraud before Chief U.S. District Judge William M. Skretny. The charge carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, a fine of \$250,000 or both.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Russell T. Ippolito, Jr., who is handling the case, stated that between April 20, 2009, and June 9, 2009, Fritz conspired with another individual to defraud State Farm Automobile Insurance Company by inflating a claim for automobile insurance policy proceeds. The defendant assisted in making a claim with State Farm following the theft of the co-conspirator's automobile, a 2003 Cadillac CTS. The claim included two fraudulent receipts, one falsely indicated that new tire rims had been added to the vehicle and the other falsely indicated that a new muffler had recently been installed on the vehicle. The two false receipts inflated the value of the vehicle by more than \$3,000.

The defendant made three other unrelated false claims for automobile insurance policy proceeds involving three other vehicles. In addition to the false claims for insurance, Fritz also abused his position as a Buffalo Police Officer. In October 2009, the defendant unlawfully opened a New York State Department of Motor Vehicles account, enabling him to search DMV databases at no charge. Only law enforcement officials can open a DMV no-fee account like the one opened by Fritz.

The loss to the DMV was \$6,400, and the loss to the insurance companies was \$57,310.35, all totaling \$63,710.35.

The plea is the culmination of an investigation by the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles, under the direction of Commissioner Barbara Fiala, the Buffalo Police Department, under the direction of Commissioner Daniel Derenda, the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance, under the direction of Commissioner Thomas Mattox, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Christopher M. Piehota.

Sentencing is scheduled for January 24, 2012 at 9:00 a.m. before Judge Skretny.

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