



BROOME COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff Frederick J. Akshar II

Undersheriff Sammy L. Davis

155 Lt. Van Winkle Drive, Binghamton, NY 13905

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Contact Emmanuel Priest

607-778-2437

emmanuel.priest@broomecountyny.gov

BROOME COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE PRESS RELEASE

Falsified Legal Mail No Longer a Viable Tool for Smuggling Contraband into Correctional Facility

(TOWN OF DICKINSON) The door has closed on smuggling drugs and contraband inside falsified legal mail at the Broome County Correctional Facility.

For decades, personal mail to incarcerated individuals had served as a possible entry point for contraband. To counteract these efforts, the Broome County Correctional Facility obtained a regulatory variance in 2022 from the New York State Commission of Corrections to allow investigators to separately inspect and photocopy the mail, providing physical copies of the correspondence to inmates to read and keep. The original mail would be placed in the incarcerated individual's property storage until release.

Legal mail was exempt from this regulation and had to be delivered directly to the inmate and opened in front of them. After a visual inspection of the materials by a corrections officer, inmates were then able to take the envelope and its contents back to their cells.

An influx of envelopes now stamped with "Privileged" or "Legal Mail" served as the primary method for contraband smuggling via mail, but thanks to a second regulatory variance obtained by the Broome County Correctional Facility, that door has closed.

On dozens of occasions under the previous regulations, investigators discovered suspicious "legal" mail that had in fact concealed various types of contraband. Hidden within the large envelopes filled with what appeared to be legal material was paper soaked in different illicit substances, including K2, methamphetamine, heroin, and even RAID insecticide. The paper was usually off-color, stained, or wrinkled, but other times it would match the rest of the "legal documents" almost perfectly. Other times, tiny squares of paper soaked in illicit substances would be found stuck behind the stapled corners of stacks of falsified legal paper.

The contraband could either be smoked or placed into the mouth and sucked on to attain the desired effects.

General Information:
(607) 778-1911

Fiscal:
(607) 778-2928

Garnishees:
(607) 778-2926

Civil:
(607) 778-2145

Identification:
(607) 778-2924

Records:
(607) 778-2166

Despite being fraudulent, the envelopes and letterhead of this falsified mail would often contain the logos and return addresses of local or regional law firms or attorneys, which may have been taken from public websites. While investigators have been able to catch dozens of pieces falsified legal mail, it's estimated that countless items made it past a visual inspection and into housing units of the facility over the years.

This state regulation ended when the Broome County Correctional Facility obtained a variance on June 28th, 2023 from the New York State Commission of Corrections allowing staff to copy all legal mail in the presence of incarcerated individuals, but not allowing the incarcerated to obtain the original physical correspondence or envelopes while housed in the facility.

Sheriff Fred Akshar said, "I want to thank our dedicated Corrections staff for their tireless dedication and vigilance in their efforts to prevent dangerous and deadly contraband from entering and circulating within the Broome County Correctional Facility. This new variance, along with our new Corrections Investigations K9 unit, is already making their jobs much easier by cutting off another criminal contraband and drug smuggling tactic. My message to would-be smugglers is this: Your tactics are no longer viable. Please take your talents elsewhere in a more productive and a more legitimate legal pursuit."

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<Pictured: The pictured suspicious mail was recently discovered and is believed to be soaked in RAID insecticide spray. The Correctional Facility Investigations Unit attempted to contact the Law Firm that was listed, but the firm refused to verify if they had sent the intended recipient any legal mail.>