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AUDIT FLAGS 1,905 LICENSES ISSUED TO THE DECEASED

Nearly 2,000 driver's licenses were issued in the names of Massachusetts residents after the dates of their death, according to a new state audit of the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV).

The audit found that 97 percent of the licenses were still listed as active as of January.

"The failure to prevent individuals from obtaining identification under the names of deceased people creates a significant public safety risk to the Commonwealth," said State Auditor Suzanne Bump. "Fixing this problem must be a top priority for the RMV."

Bump is calling for the RMV to properly use databases such as the Social Security Administration's Death Master File to identify and deactivate the licenses of deceased individuals.

This is not the first time an audit has found a state agency failing to remove deceased individuals from its program roll. A 2013 audit of the Department of Transitional Assistance found that the agency paid over $2 million in benefits to deceased people. And a 2016 audit of the Massachusetts State Retirement Board noted that the agency made more than $687,000 in payments to deceased pensioners.

The audit also highlights other fraudulent forms of identification that the RMV has issued, including over 10,000 requests for disability parking placards from individuals who were deceased. A 2016 report from the Massachusetts Inspector General's Office found significant abuse of handicap placards in the Commonwealth.

In response to the audit, the RMV said, "The RMV does use the Social Security Administration's Death Master File and used it throughout the audit period. The RMV supplemented the use of this file in 2016 with the use of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Vital Statistics File that includes death records. These files are run against the RMV database and any matching records, including placard holders, are marked as deceased." - Chris Triunfo/SHNS

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