

### March 29, 2007- Priest Routinely Renewed Permits

A Courant Investigation: Rev. Stephen Foley Case, By DAVE ALTIMARI And ELIZABETH HAMILTON  
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In each of the four years after state police removed the Rev. Stephen Foley as chaplain because of suspected sexual abuse of young boys, the state of Connecticut approved a special permit that allowed Foley to drive a car equipped with sirens and red emergency lights, the same type of vehicle his accusers say he used to lure them.

The state also granted Foley's request for the law-enforcement-sounding vanity plate "HQ-10" in 1993, the same year allegations led the Catholic Church to remove Foley from active ministry, records obtained by The Courant show.

The Archdiocese of Hartford this week ordered Foley to leave St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield and to sell the police-equipped Crown Victoria he has been driving for years. The action follows stories in The Courant revealing that Foley, who was also a chaplain for a number of local fire departments, was still driving a car equipped with flashing lights, sirens and radios.

A 1994 summary from a state police investigation concluded that Foley's accusers "were fascinated with Foley's car because of the lights, siren and radio, and were thrilled to go to a scene." State police did not pursue charges because the statute of limitations had expired.

On Wednesday, state motor vehicle officials said they are investigating how Foley, 65, was able to get the sirens and lights permit renewed through 1998 and the circumstances of how he registered a new Crown Victoria he purchased in 2000.

According to DMV records, the title and registration papers for the car he bought in 2000 listed the New England Association of Fire Chiefs as the owner, but Foley signed all the documents and wrote down his West Hartford post office box for the association's address.

Foley transferred ownership of the car to himself after a few months, according to DMV records, then traded it in for a new, fully loaded Crown Victoria two years later under a special deal offered by Ford.

The association of fire chiefs has denied that it had any role in the purchase or registration of the car. Records indicate that the registration of Foley's car was the only time in the past 30 years that a car has been registered in Connecticut under the group's name.

Foley first obtained a "red, white and siren" permit from the DMV in June of 1993, and he renewed it every year through 1998. The DMV is in charge of issuing emergency light permits to fire departments, ambulance companies and constables.

State law limits distribution of such permits to fire chiefs and deputies authorized by chiefs to receive the permits. The permit allows the recipient to bypass traffic laws - such as stopping at red lights - when responding to emergencies.

The state issues other permits - allowing the use of blue lights - that do not allow the holder to bypass traffic laws when on an emergency call.

DMV documents show that in the years he was renewing the permit, Foley referred to himself as "Chief," until the last renewal, when he scribbled out "Chief" and instead wrote in "Chief Fire Chaplain of Connecticut."

There are no other signatures on the document. Foley paid an annual \$14 fee for the permit.

DMV spokesman William Seymour said Wednesday that Foley's permit renewal was handled the same way as anyone else's.

"Some of the renewal permits had names of departments, others [like Foley's] did not," Seymour said.

In the years since Foley last received a permit, Seymour said, the DMV has changed the process of handing out the documents. The agency now mails the permits to firehouses for distribution by the chief, he said.

Seymour said the DMV now requires a sign-off by the fire chief, and the name of the chief and the fire department are checked against DMV records. If there is no fire department listed on the permit, the chief must produce a letter on fire department stationery requesting the permit and a letter from the town's first selectman or mayor attesting that the fire department serves the municipality.

Currently, Seymour said, no fire chaplains have light permits. Historically, he said, only one or two others besides Foley ever held them. Seymour did not know the names of the other chaplains.

Foley didn't try to renew the permit in 1999, and he also turned in the special license plate, DMV records show. It is unclear why he stopped renewing the permit. Foley could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

In the years Foley was obtaining the permit, he was serving as chaplain for both the Hartford and West Hartford fire departments, according to officers there. But there is no indication that either chief knew about Foley's permit.

Hartford Fire Chief Charles Teale did not return a call for comment Wednesday. Former West Hartford Fire Chief Michael Parker, who served in that capacity during the 1990s when Foley applied for the permit, also did not return a call for comment.

Parker is now assistant fire chief at the Hartford Fire Department. Foley, identified as chaplain for the Hartford Fire Department in a 1996 Courant article, was with Parker during his swearing-in ceremony in Hartford.

Seymour said the department is notifying both the state police and Bloomfield police that Foley doesn't hold a current permit to have lights on his car.

Archbishop Henry Mansell this week ordered Foley to sell the car and move out of the seminary where he has lived since 1993.

In 1993, state police opened an investigation of Foley after allegations that he had used his car to lure teenage boys and then molested them. The abuse claims dated to the mid-1970s, when Foley was a state police chaplain and a fire chaplain for several local departments in the Hartford area.

Although prosecutors determined that the statute of limitations had expired, then-state police Col. Joseph A. Perry Jr. told Foley in December 1994 that he was no longer wanted as a state police chaplain.

Perry wrote to Foley that "it is our position that some of the allegations are true."

It appears that the state police never informed other state agencies or other fire departments of its conclusions about Foley.

It is unclear if Foley remained the chaplain of other area fire departments during the period he held the sirens and lights permit. He did remain affiliated with the New England Association of Fire Chiefs after the state police removed him as chaplain.

