



Shari C. Hyman
Commissioner and Chair

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**THE BUSINESS INTEGRITY COMMISSION LEADS INVESTIGATION TO BREAK
UP LARGE SCALE RECYCLING THEFT RING**

*Thieves Targeted Large Retail Stores throughout New Jersey Stealing Valuable Cardboard and
Selling it at Transfer Stations in New York and New Jersey*

*Ring Orchestrated By Recently Paroled and Banned Principal with Assistance from Current
Transfer Station Applicant*

Today, New York City Business Integrity Commissioner and Chair Shari C. Hyman announced three arrests of the perpetrators of a large-scale recycling theft operation responsible for stealing tens of thousands of dollars worth of cardboard from large New Jersey retail sites. Neil Devito was arrested in Old Bridge, New Jersey and John Nichols in South Amboy, New Jersey. Both were charged with four separate felony charges. Vincenzo Grasso was arrested on a Parole violation by New York State Parole in Staten Island, New York. BIC, New York State Parole and the New Jersey State Police jointly conducted the arrests.

“Today’s arrests serve as a high watermark in tackling the growing challenge of recycling theft in this region and puts these criminals on notice that there is zero tolerance for this illegal activity,” said Commissioner and Chair Hyman, “With the value of recyclables spiking, there can be no window of opportunity for this organized criminal behavior, and I want to thank the New Jersey State Police for their assistance on this investigation and the New York State Parole for assisting in the arrest.”

“This group invested a considerable amount of money to create a company which sole purpose was to steal from major retailers throughout New Jersey,” said Colonel Rick Fuentes, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police. “Although this type of theft is not readily visible to the public it ultimately hurts the customer in the form of higher prices. Due to the joint efforts of the State Police and the New York City Business Integrity Commission, this theft ring has been dismantled.”

“The daily theft of cardboard hurts our entire industry, from small family-owned hauling operators to larger firms who lose the revenue, and their customers that feel the loss in greater fees,” said Ron Bergamini, CEO of Action Environmental Services, the largest commercial hauler in New York City, “Today’s announcement and the cooperation needed to get here is welcome across our industry as this is not a victimless crime.”

BIC's investigation was triggered by a complaint that debarred individual and NYS parolee Vincenzo Grasso was attempting to get back into the trade waste industry. Soon into the investigation, it became clear that Grasso had enlisted Neil Devito in orchestrating a cardboard theft ring focusing on Walmarts and Sam's Clubs in New Jersey. Neil Devito also has an application pending at BIC for a waste transfer station. With the value of cardboard hovering around \$100/ton, the volume of cardboard generated by these stores made them an attractive target.

Under the company name "Metro Paper, Inc.", Vincenzo Grasso and Neil Devito built a shadow operation that sent trucks to stores across the state where they essentially posed as legal waste haulers. Spotter vehicles would scout stores for a "pick-up" and after indentifying a location would send waiting trucks to steal the cardboard from loading docks and sell it at a handful of transfer stations in New York and New Jersey. At its peak, the operation was running routes six days a week, using trucks from Straightline Trucking, a company owned by Neil Devito. From April 2012 to the end of July 2012, BIC investigators observed 900 tons of cardboard that was illegally hauled and sold for approximately \$103,000. Considering the value and frequency of similar thefts occurring at other stores in the region, it is believed the operation is responsible for an even larger sum in stolen recyclables over this period.

The Business Integrity Commission ("BIC") is both a law enforcement and regulatory agency charged with the oversight of the private carting industry, the businesses operating in the City's public wholesale markets, and the shipboard gambling industry. The mission of BIC is to eliminate organized crime and other forms of corrupting and criminality from the industries it regulates.