



**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
HEARING BY THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING**

**TESTIMONY OF JOCELYN E. STRAUBER  
COMMISSIONER, NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATION**

**CONCERNING SECURITY GUARDS, FIRE GUARDS, AND  
NYCHA'S OVERSIGHT OF CONTRACTORS**

**TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 2025**

Good morning. My name is Jocelyn Strauber and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Investigation ("DOI"). Thank you, Chair Banks and members of the Committee on Public Housing, for the opportunity to speak about DOI's recent investigation and report on the oversight of security guards at New York City Housing Authority ("NYCHA") Senior Buildings and compliance with fire guard requirements at Senior Buildings and other NYCHA developments.

DOI's investigation identified numerous failures in the security and fire guard services provided by FJC Security, doing business as Allied Universal Security Services ("Allied Universal" or "Allied"), which had a \$155-million, five-year contract with NYCHA to provide these services. DOI determined that NYCHA and Allied failed to consistently provide required and sufficient oversight of the Allied guards and thus failed to ensure that Allied fulfilled its obligations to NYCHA under the contract. The absence of security guards at buildings dedicated to seniors jeopardized the safety of some of NYCHA's more vulnerable residents, and the absence of fire guards not only posed a safety risk to residents but also violated the New York City Fire Code. Furthermore, as a result of NYCHA's lack of oversight of Allied, NYCHA paid Allied for services that it did not provide and missed opportunities to pursue contractual damages to which NYCHA was entitled based on Allied's non-performance.

DOI's investigation was prompted by March 2022 media reports that the front door of NYCHA's Corsi Houses in East Harlem did not lock, allowing trespassers to enter. DOI initially focused on the functionality of the lobby doors at Corsi Houses and the quality of security guard services provided by Allied Universal at that location. In DOI's first inspection, investigators observed that the scheduled security guard was absent and a non-resident trespasser was in the lobby of Corsi Houses, prompting a broader investigation of the security guards and infrastructure at NYCHA's Senior Buildings that continued through April 2023.

DOI inspected 39 Senior Buildings and reviewed CCTV footage of 55 security guard shifts, reviewing a total of 94 individual security guard shifts as part of its investigation. DOI concluded that security guards frequently abandoned their posts or failed to show up for work and falsified their paper timesheets to reflect a full shift. We found that approximately 68% of the security guards that we surveilled through inspections and review of CCRV footage were absent for all or part of their required shift. Of the 94 shifts we reviewed, 54 guards abandoned their post for an average of approximately two hours; five were no-shows for their entire eight-hour shift; and five committed other infractions, such as remaining in an unauthorized location away from their required posts, sleeping, or consuming alcohol during shifts. Some of those absent guards falsified their timesheets. DOI also found that approximately 32% of the 28 lobby doors that we inspected were not secure, and 70% of the 63 senior buildings that we looked at had CCTV cameras that were inoperable or could not be viewed remotely.

In the spring and summer of 2023, DOI also investigated the fire guard services provided by Allied Universal at NYCHA buildings where, due to deficient fire safety features, the NYC Fire Code requires that a fire guard be present 24/7.

DOI inspected 60 Fire Watch Sites in June and July of 2023 and found that only 38% of the fire guards scheduled to be present were at their assigned posts for the duration of DOI's inspection, which lasted one to two hours. Some fire guards also falsified their time sheets to indicate that they worked a full shift. DOI made NYCHA aware of its findings while conducting the investigation, and the fire guards continued to abandon their posts thereafter, in violation of Allied's contract with NYCHA. Furthermore, DOI found that scheduled fire guards were absent during three fires that occurred in three different developments -- in the Ingersoll Houses, Douglass Houses and Taft Houses -- two of which resulted in minor injuries. These fires occurred in February, March and May of 2023.

DOI attributed these lapses in security and fire guard services, in part, to NYCHA and Allied Universal's failure to consistently exercise required oversight of the security and fire guards that could have prevented or mitigated the guards' absences and other noncompliance. The contract, as well as NYCHA's Standard Operating Procedure manual, required NYCHA to actively oversee security and fire guards. At NYCHA, oversight was the responsibility of the Office of Safety and Security ("OSS"), a Department that did not consistently conduct field inspections of the security and fire guards and did not document the inspections that it did conduct for multiple consecutive years of the contract term. As a result of these failures, NYCHA and Allied Universal did not identify and promptly address the guards' absences and other

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noncompliance and Allied Universal billed, and NYCHA paid, for services which NYCHA did not in fact receive.

While Allied Universal is no longer providing services to NYCHA, NYCHA has committed to provide security guards at senior buildings and continues to be legally required to provide fire guards where necessary. Therefore DOI made 12 recommendations in its report to improve NYCHA's oversight of vendors providing these services:

- NYCHA contracts for security and fire guard services should include a requirement that a vendor provide a smartphone application for the guards that incorporates geofencing technology and electronic timekeeping that alerts managerial staff when guards leave the boundary of their assigned post during their shift.
- NYCHA contracts for security and fire guard services should include a definition of "post abandonment" that specifies the minimum number of minutes that constitutes post abandonment.
- NYCHA should provide security guards with a designated security desk on the main floor of the building to serve as a central location for the guards. NYCHA should also post signage in the lobby with information about contacting NYCHA for emergencies or with complaints or inquiries.
- NYCHA should require OSS to conduct and document a minimum number of unannounced inspections each month.
- NYCHA should revise the Security Guard Service Field Inspection Report to require that inspections include a check that the lobby doors are functioning properly, to specify that deficiencies related to security infrastructure be immediately reported, and to provide an electronic method of submitting the form.
- NYCHA should establish a process for receipt and verification of invoices, certified payroll, electronic timekeeping, and geofencing records prior to payment.
- NYCHA should require the vendor to provide bi-weekly invoices to permit timely CCTV footage review and NYCHA should retain the relevant footage until the invoice has been approved.

NYCHA accepted eight of the 12 recommendations and accepted the remaining four in part.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to take any questions you may have.