



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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**DOI ARRESTS LICENSED ENGINEER ON CHARGES OF FALSELY CERTIFYING
THAT BALCONIES ON A BROOKLYN BUILDING HAD BEEN INSPECTED AND WERE PROPERLY CONSTRUCTED**
--In December 2008, a City firefighter suffered injuries at the site, when two floors of balconies gave way--

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced today the arrest of a New York State-licensed Professional Engineer on charges of filing false documents with the City Department of Buildings ("DOB") certifying his supposed inspection of work at a Brooklyn building. DOI's investigation began after two floors of wooden balconies at the rear of the building collapsed in December 2008, injuring a firefighter as he fought a fire there. DOI, along with DOB's Brooklyn Borough Office, reviewed DOB records and interviewed witnesses regarding the balconies. The office of Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes is prosecuting the case.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "A professional who falsely certifies that a construction project follows the Building Code without even inspecting the job potentially puts the public at risk. DOI continues to work with the Buildings Department and our law enforcement partners to expose this kind of fraud and hold those responsible to account."

VASILIOS KOURKOUHELIS, 34, of Astoria, N.Y., has been charged with two counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a class "E" felony. Upon conviction, a class E felony is punishable by up to four years in prison.

According to the criminal complaint, DOB records indicate that in September 1988, DOB issued a violation at 222 Kings Highway in Brooklyn for balconies that failed to comply with the Building Code and had been erected without a permit. KOURKOUHELIS was a Professional Engineer and was thereby authorized to self-certify jobs with DOB. KOURKOUHELIS completed, signed, and affixed his Professional Engineer's stamp to a "Request for a Letter of Completion" and a "Technical Report 1" filed with DOB in January 2006, indicating that the job was satisfactorily completed and that he had personally inspected it. DOI's investigation found, however, that KOURKOUHELIS had not inspected the balconies to confirm that the violations had been corrected or that the balconies had been built in compliance with the plans.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked DOB Commissioner Robert D. LiMandri and Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes and their staffs for their assistance on this investigation.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Inspector General for DOB, Michael Carroll, and members of his staff, including Investigator Robert Miller, Deputy Inspector General Edward Zinser, Associate Inspector General Byron Biggerstaff and Chief Investigator James McElligott, under the direction of DOI Assistant Deputy Commissioner John B. Kantor. Additional assistance was provided by John Egnatios-Beene, an attorney with DOB's Legal Division.

Assistant District Attorney Joseph DiBenedetto, Deputy Chief of the Kings County District Attorney's Rackets Bureau, has been assigned to the prosecution of the case.

A criminal complaint is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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