



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation  
ROSE GILL HEARN  
COMMISSIONER



80 MAIDEN LANE  
NEW YORK, NY 10038  
212-825-5900

Release #24-2013  
[nyc.gov/html/doi](http://nyc.gov/html/doi)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
FRIDAY, JULY 19, 2013**

**CONTACT: DIANE STRUZZI  
(212) 825-5931**

**DOI INVESTIGATION FINDS CITY FIREFIGHTER MADE FALSE 911 CALLS  
AND STOLE FIREFIGHTERS' MONEY FROM FIREHOUSES**

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), issued the following report (attached) regarding a New York City firefighter who placed several false 911 calls, which initiated an FDNY response to the calls, so that he could enter various firehouses in order to steal money from firefighters' personal belongings while the firefighters were responding to his false calls.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "It is surprising that a firefighter would both call in fake 911 calls and steal money from colleagues. To do so at this time, when there is a heightened need and demand for units to be responding to legitimate calls to people in need is especially outrageous. This individual is not representative of the members of the New York City Fire Department who serve the City with such distinction."

FDNY Commissioner Salvatore J. Cassano thanked all of the participants in the investigation.

*DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City.*

**DOI's press releases can also be found at [twitter.com/doinews](http://twitter.com/doinews)  
Get the worms out of the Big Apple. To report someone ripping off the City, call DOI at (212) 825-5959.**



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL  
80 MAIDEN LANE – 16<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10038  
(212) 825-3500; FAX (212) 825-2150

ROBERT A. GIGANTE  
INSPECTOR GENERAL  
JENNIFER SCULCO  
INSPECTOR GENERAL

July 19, 2013

Salvatore Cassano  
Commissioner  
New York City Fire Department  
9 Metro Tech Center  
Brooklyn, New York 11201

Re: Firefighter Joseph Keene

Dear Commissioner Cassano:

The Department of Investigation ("DOI") is conducting an investigation into a series of thefts from Fire Department ("FDNY") firehouses in Queens and Richmond Counties. This investigation is being conducted with the assistance of the FDNY Bureau of Fire Investigation and the New York City Police Department ("NYPD"). The investigation is ongoing, and this report is a summary only and does not contain all facts and information learned during the course of this investigation. At this time, DOI has substantiated that FDNY employee, Firefighter Joseph Keene, placed several false 911 calls which initiated an FDNY response so that he could enter various firehouses to steal money from firefighters' personal belongings once inside. Keene was interviewed this week and admitted to these crimes to DOI and detectives from the NYPD Squad at DOI. A summary of findings and Keene's criminal conduct to date are detailed below.

On or about May 29, 2013, a call was made to 911 reporting a smell of gas in the vicinity of Forrest and Veltman Avenues in Staten Island, which resulted in Ladder 83 (875 Jewett Avenue, Staten Island) responding to the area. The report was determined by the FDNY to be an unfounded report. The investigation determined that the cell phone that made the 911 call is registered to Keene, and the 911 system identified that call had been made from a cell phone that was in proximity to the Ladder 83/Engine 163 firehouse. Keene has admitted that he made the 911 report of a smell of gas in the vicinity of Forrest and Veltman Avenues, and that, in sum and substance, he did so in order to enter the firehouse to take money while the Ladder 83 personnel were out responding to the call. While the firehouse was on the false call, Keene entered and stole approximately \$150-\$200 from the firehouse.

On or about June 2, 2013, a call was made to 911 reporting a transformer sparking in the vicinity of Victory Boulevard and Forrest Avenue in Staten Island, which resulted in Ladder 80 (1573 Castleton Ave., Staten Island) responding to the area. The report was determined by the FDNY to be an unfounded report. The investigation determined that the cell phone that made the 911 call is the same one discussed above registered to Keene, and the 911 system identified that call had been made from a cell phone that was in proximity to the

Ladder 80/Engine 157 firehouse. While the firehouse was responding to the false call, Keene admitted, in sum and substance, that he entered the firehouse and stole between approximately \$400-\$500.

The investigation determined that on or about June 11, 2013, Joseph Keene placed another false 911 call from the above mentioned cell phone number. During this 911 call, Keane reported a gas odor at Jamaica Avenue and Little Neck Parkway that resulted in Engine 251 (254-20 Union Tpke, Queens) responding to the area. That call was also determined to be unfounded after the unit responded. While the Engine Company was responding to the call, Keene entered the firehouse and stole approximately \$1,200. Moreover, during the investigation video surveillance was obtained that shows an individual who appears to be Keene exiting a car and entering the firehouse after the Engine Company had left to respond to the 911 call. A car of the similar make and model is registered to Keene. Keene admits it was him seen on the video getting out of the car to enter the firehouse.

On or about the morning of July 17, 2013, Joseph Keene reported for work at the FDNY facility on Randall's Island. He admitted, in sum and substance, that while at the facility he stole approximately \$40-\$60 from the employee locker area.

Later that day, on or about July 17, 2013, Keene entered Engine 263/Ladder 117 (42-06 Astoria Blvd., Queens) after the units were out of the firehouse covering for a unit responding to a fire in the Bronx. Keene gained entry to the firehouse. Notably, Keene apparently did not sign into the logbook at the Engine 263/Ladder 117 Housewatch. While inside, he has admitted, he stole approximately \$100. A report was made to the NYPD that day regarding the missing money. A witness also identified Keene as entering the firehouse that day.

DOI investigators and NYPD detectives from the DOI Squad, interviewed Keene on July 18, 2013. Keene admitted, in sum and substance, to the incidents described above during which time he confessed to all of the above conduct.

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on its investigation, DOI makes the following policy and procedure recommendations to FDNY:

1. Members should be reminded to secure all Department and personal property, especially when the unit is not in quarters. Personal property should be secured in locked lockers.
2. As noted above, on July 17, 2013 Keene entered the firehouse unchallenged. He was not asked for identification and apparently no one recorded his entry in the Housewatch journal. The role the Housewatch officer performs is vital to the security of a firehouse. In prior investigations, DOI has discovered the fact that the FDNY rules and regulations governing Housewatch duty have not consistently been followed. On various occasions, at times through public reports, DOI has made, and FDNY has implemented, recommendations pertaining to the role of the Housewatch officer and unauthorized personnel present in firehouses. As such, DOI again recommends that remedial training and re-enforcement of the Housewatch rules should be provided and disseminated to all FDNY units via agency-wide communication.

## **CONCLUSION**

This matter was referred to the Queens District Attorney's Office, where Keene is being charged today with Falsely Reporting an Incident in the second degree, Grand Larceny in the fourth degree, and Burglary in the second degree, all felonies, as well as Petit Larceny. The findings of the investigation as they relate to the

incidents on Staten Island will also be referred to the Richmond County District Attorney's Office. DOI is also referring this matter to the FDNY for whatever action you deem appropriate including termination of Firefighter Keene.

Please contact Inspector General Robert Gigante (212) 825-3517 or Deputy Inspector General Ed Richards at (212) 825-2152 should you have any questions, and please have your office provide them with an update within 30 days concerning any action your office intends to take with respect to the preceding policy and procedure recommendations and/or disciplinary action.

Sincerely,

Rose Gill Hearn  
Commissioner

Robert A. Gigante  
Inspector General