



Department of Investigation

Press Release

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NYCHA EMPLOYEE ARRESTED FOR THEFT OF TENANTS' RENT PAYMENTS ***-- Stole 9 NYCHA Tenant Money Orders Totaling Over \$3,000 --***

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation ("DOI"), today announced the felony arrest of RONNIE STEVENS, a New York City Housing Authority ("NYCHA") employee assigned to the Wald Houses Management Office on the lower East Side, for stealing 9 money orders, totaling \$3,098, that had been submitted by NYCHA tenants for payment of their rent, and then unlawfully endorsing and cashing them, or presenting them as payment for his wife's rent at NYCHA's Tilden Houses in Brooklyn.

According to Commissioner Gill Hearn, DOI began an investigation this past January, when it was notified by the GreenPoint Savings Bank in Brooklyn that 4 money orders, payable to NYCHA, had been presented for deposit, via ATM machines, into the personal savings account of STEVENS' wife. Shortly thereafter, several tenants complained to NYCHA that they received delinquent rent notices although they claimed that they paid their rent by depositing money orders into the mail drop box located in the management office at the Wald Houses.

STEVENS, who worked as a receptionist in the management office, was responsible for collecting rent payments placed in the drop box by the residents of Wald Houses and recording those payments into NYCHA's rent collection database.

DOI's investigation revealed that, between November 2001 and January 2002, STEVENS stole 9 money orders, ranging from \$175 to \$619, that various tenants had deposited into the drop box. STEVENS allegedly altered 2 of the money orders by crossing out the names of the payers -- all residents of Wald Houses -- and payee information -- Wald Houses -- and substituting his wife's name as payer, and replacing "Wald Houses" with "Tilden Houses", where STEVENS and his wife reside. STEVENS then submitted these 2 altered money orders to NYCHA as payment for rent on their apartment. During the course of the investigation, DOI also discovered that STEVENS is an unauthorized tenant in his wife's Tilden Houses apartment, where she has resided for the last 10 ½ years.

The investigation further disclosed that the other 7 stolen money orders were deposited at various branches of the GreenPoint Savings Bank, in Carnesie and downtown Brooklyn, into the savings account of STEVENS' wife.

STEVENS, 30, a NYCHA employee since November 2001, earned \$23,671 a year. He has been charged

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with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a Class D Felony. If convicted, he faces up to 7 years in prison.

The investigation was conducted by DOI Assistant Commissioner and NYCHA Inspector General Steven A. Pasichow and members of his staff, including Assistant Inspector General Irene Serrapica and Confidential Investigator April Mastrangelo.

Commissioner Gill Hearn expressed her sincere appreciation to NYPD Detective Frank Donahue of Manhattan's 1st Precinct and Investigator Paul Teknus of the GreenPoint Savings Bank for their participation in the investigation.

The Office of Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Jonathan Berger, under the supervision of ADA Thomas Wornom of the Special Prosecutions Bureau, is handling the matter.

Commissioner Gill Hearn urges anyone who has information or evidence of wrongdoing within NYCHA to contact DOI's Inspector General at 212-306-3355.