



Department of Investigation

Press Release

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28 CITY EMPLOYEES CHARGED IN UNEMPLOYMENT "DOUBLE DIP" SCAM

FRIDAY, JUNE 18, 1999 -- EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), and Manhattan District Attorney ROBERT M. MORGENTHAU today announced that, as part of an ongoing probe, 28 City employees -- including 15 school nurses, 8 highway repairers, and 5 parks workers -- have been arrested on felony charges for illegally collecting a total of more than \$70,000 in unemployment benefits while also receiving a City salary. The investigation -- "OPERATION DOUBLE DIPPING" -- is focusing on "seasonal" City workers who regularly return to the City payroll after their off-season but fraudulently continue to collect unemployment benefits.

The defendants, seasonal employees working for the New York City Departments of Health (DOH), Transportation (DOT), and Parks and Recreation (Parks), were each employed by the City for only part of the year. For example, seasonal employees such as school nurses work according to the school calendar; highway repairers typically do not work in the winter months; and parks workers are usually employed only during the spring and summer.

Commissioner Kuriansky and District Attorney Morgenthau noted that seasonal City employees are generally entitled to collect unemployment benefits during the off-season if they are not otherwise employed. To collect such benefits, the employees must first file for unemployment with the New York State Department of Labor (DOL), which has established a push-button telephone system to generate unemployment checks. Thereafter, the employees must regularly access DOL's computerized telephone system and verify electronically that they have not worked, and are therefore entitled to receive unemployment benefits for particular days or weeks. Although unemployment payments are made directly by DOL to the employees, the New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) reimburses the State for all unemployment benefits paid to City workers.

Commissioner Kuriansky said, "The defendants -- nearly all of whom have worked for the City for over five years -- literally "dialed in" their fraud from their City job or from the comfort of their home. Fortunately, we have made great strides recently in cross-matching various government computer systems with the City payroll, making it much easier to detect these schemes. Moreover, DCAS has now initiated a new unemployment insurance case-tracking system that will monitor benefits eligibility better and faster."

District Attorney Morgenthau said, "Unemployment insurance fraud is a serious matter that costs New York taxpayers millions of dollars each year. The system is designed to assist hard-working residents who find themselves temporarily out of work. This case should serve as a warning to those individuals who cheat the system that they will be caught and be prosecuted."

Among those arrested were:

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—**LAMONT DANIEL**, who has been employed by DOT as an assistant highway repairer for the past seven years, and typically worked from March to December each year, earning \$32,254 in City salary. For 113 days between March 27, 1994, and March 30, 1997, DANIEL illegally collected \$6,825 in unemployment benefits by claiming that he was not working when, in fact, he was employed by DOT and receiving his City salary.

—**CLAUDE ORMSBY**, who has been employed by Parks as a seasonal worker for the past six years, earning \$31,810 annually from the City. ORMSBY generally did not work during the winter months and was entitled to collect unemployment benefits during his off-season. However, for 100 days between November 5, 1993, and April 27, 1997, ORMSBY unlawfully collected \$3,895 in unemployment benefits by representing to DOL that he was not working when, in fact, he was working for Parks and receiving his City salary.

— **MAKEASHA EVANS**, who has been employed by DOH as a public health advisor (school nurse) for the past five years, earning \$13.40 per hour working in the New York City schools. EVANS typically did not work summers or during school holidays, when City schools were closed. For 133 days between August 28, 1995, and January 10, 1999, EVANS illegally collected \$5,085 in unemployment benefits by fraudulently representing to DOL that she was not working when, in fact, she was employed by DOH and receiving her City salary.

The defendants have been variously charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a Class D felony punishable by up to 7 years in prison, or Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, a Class E felony punishable by up to 4 years in prison.

Commissioner Kuriansky and District Attorney Morgenthau expressed their appreciation to the City Department of Citywide Administrative Services, and to the State Department of Labor and its Inspector General's Office, for their cooperation and assistance during the course of the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by DOI Acting Inspector General for DCAS Robert Joyce and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspector General Stacie Pittell, Assistant Inspector General Mary Kozlow, Senior Investigator Cassandra Cameron-White, Confidential Investigators Christine Carl, Jonathan Weinstein, and Frank Tumminia, and Investigative Auditor Sharon Sullivan.

The prosecution of the cases is being handled by Assistant District Attorney Leroy Frazer, Chief of the District Attorney's Special Prosecutions Bureau, and members of his staff.

DEFENDANT ADDENDUM

1. **AUGUSTIN ALAMO**, 37, of Manhattan, has been employed by DOT as an assistant highway repairer for the last six years, earning \$32,254 in City salary. ALAMO was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 29 days of unemployment benefits (\$1500) between January 13, 1996, and March 29, 1998.

2. **MARCELLA BRAILSFORD**, 27, of Brooklyn, has been employed by DOH as a public health advisor for the last ten years, and earns \$14 per hour. BRAILSFORD was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 64 days of unemployment benefits (\$2,584) between September 1, 1994, and September 30, 1997.

3. **JOANNE CHASE**, 37, of Manhattan, has been employed by DOH as a public health assistant for the last six years, and earns \$14 per hour. CHASE was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 28 days of unemployment benefits (\$1,109) between April 20, 1998, and June 7, 1998.

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4. **NICOLE E. CLARKE**, 30, of the Bronx, has been employed by DOH as a public health advisor for the last 2-½ years, and earns \$14 per hour. CLARKE was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 49 days of unemployment benefits (\$2,162) between August 26, 1996, and January 11, 1998.
5. **RACHEL COLLIER**, 35, of Queens, has been employed by DOH as a public health advisor for the last 6 years, and earns \$11 per hour. COLLIER was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 65 days of unemployment benefits (\$2,389) between August 26, 1996, and January 25, 1998.
6. **ANDREA COMBS**, 38, of Queens Village, Queens, has been employed by DOH as a public health assistant for the last 6 years, and earns \$11 per hour. COMBS was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 85 days of unemployment benefits (\$2,583) between August 31, 1997, and September 13, 1998.
7. **HARLEY CUSHNIE**, 47, of the Bronx, has been employed by DOH as a public health nurse for the last 4 years, and earns \$28 per hour. CUSHNIE was charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree for fraudulently collecting 46 days of unemployment benefits (\$3,000) between August 26, 1996, and October 5, 1997.
8. **LAMONT DANIEL**, 33, of Brooklyn, has been employed by DOT as an assistant highway repairer for the last 7 years, earning \$32,254 in City salary. DANIEL was charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree for fraudulently collecting 113 days of unemployment benefits (\$6,825) between March 27, 1994 and March 30, 1997.
9. **GLENDA EDWARDS**, 33, of the Bronx, has been employed by DOH as a public health advisor for the last 6 years, and earns \$14 per hours. EDWARDS was charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree for fraudulently collecting 104 days of unemployment benefits (\$4,560) between August 26, 1996, and January 18, 1998.
10. **MAKEASHA EVANS**, 28, of the Bronx, has been employed by DOH as a public health advisor for the last 5 years, and earns \$13 per hour. EVANS was charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree for fraudulently collecting 113 days of unemployment benefits (\$5,085) between September 3, 1995, and January 10, 1999.
11. **FRANCES GRAVES**, 50, of Brooklyn, has been employed by DOH as a public health advisor for the last 4 years, and earns \$26 per hour. GRAVES was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 22 days of unemployment benefits (\$1,480) between December 22, 1997, and September 20, 1998.
12. **LERLINE LINDO**, 59, of Brooklyn, has been employed by DOH as a junior public health nurse for the last 5 years, and earns \$27 per hour. LINDO was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 26 days of unemployment benefits (\$1,713) between August 28, 1995, and June 30, 1996.
13. **TILCIA McKAY**, 27, of Queens, has been employed by DOH as a public health advisor for the last 7 years, and earns \$11 per hour. McKAY was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 39 days of unemployment benefits (\$1,435) between August 28, 1995, and September 21, 1997.
14. **STEVE MEZZACAPPA**, 31, of Staten Island, has been employed by DOT as an assistant highway repairer for the last 6 years, earning \$32,254 in City salary. MEZZACAPPA was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 37 days of unemployment benefits (\$2,024) between March 18, 1996, and March 29, 1998.
15. **MERVIN MISSIGHER**, 43, of Manhattan, has been employed by Parks as a seasonal worker for the

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last 5 years, and earns \$11 per year. MISSIGHER was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 38 days of unemployment benefits (\$1,856) between March 20, 1997, and March 2, 1998.

16. **LUIS MORALES**, 25, of Brooklyn, has been employed by Parks as a seasonal worker for the last 5 years, and earns \$10 per hour. MORALES was charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree for fraudulently collecting 67 days of unemployment benefits (\$3,961) between April 30, 1997, and December 13, 1998.

17. **CLAUDE ORMSBY**, 29, of Brooklyn, has been employed by Parks as a seasonal worker for the last 6 years, earning \$31,810 in City salary. ORMSBY was charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree for fraudulently collecting 100 days of unemployment benefits (\$3,895) between November 5, 1993, and April 27, 1997.

18. **MANUEL RAMOS**, 51, of the Bronx, has been employed by Parks as a seasonal worker for the last 10 years, and earns \$11 per hour. RAMOS was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 46 days of unemployment benefits (\$2,585) between March 25, 1996, and March 15, 1998.

19. **PAUL REILLY**, 34, of Staten Island, has been employed by DOT as an assistant highway repairer for the last 6 years, earning \$32,254 in City salary. REILLY was charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree for fraudulently collecting 77 days of unemployment benefits (\$3,975) between March 18, 1996, and April 26, 1998.

20. **PAMELA RICHARDSON**, 33, of the Bronx, has been employed by DOH as a public health advisor for the last 7 years, and earns \$14 per hour. RICHARDSON was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 108 days of unemployment benefits (\$2,511) between September 1, 1994, and September 30, 1996.

21. **DAVID RUSSELL**, 31, of Maspeth, Queens, has been employed by DOT as an assistant highway repairer for the last 4 years, and earns \$15 per hour. RUSSELL was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 26 days of unemployment benefits (\$1,424) between March 20, 1995, and March 31, 1996.

22. **MICHAEL SCARBOROUGH**, 48, of Manhattan, has been employed by Parks as a seasonal worker for the last 6 years, and earns \$11 per hour. SCARBOROUGH was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 20 days of unemployment benefits (\$2,244) between April 6, 1998, and May 3, 1998.

23. **DELROY STENNETT**, 30, of Briarwood, Queens, has been employed by DOT as an assistant highway repairer for the last 7 years, earning \$32,254 in City salary. STENNETT was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 25 days of unemployment benefits (\$1,544) between March 20, 1995, and March 29, 1998.

24. **GENEVEVE TESTAMARK**, 43, of the Bronx, has been employed by DOH as a junior public health nurse for the last 3 years, and earns \$27 per hour. TESTAMARK was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 25 days of unemployment benefits (\$1,500) between August 26, 1996, and September 7, 1997.

25. **MAUDE TOLBERT**, 30, of Manhattan, has been employed by DOH as a public health advisor for the last 6 years, and earns \$14 per hour. TOLBERT was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 36 days of unemployment benefits (\$1,530) between January 1, 1997, and March 2, 1997.

26. **THOMAS VOTTO**, 39, of Brooklyn, has been employed by DOT as an assistant highway repairer for the last 6 years, earning \$32,254 in City salary. VOTTO was charged with Grand Larceny in

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the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 38 days of unemployment benefits (\$2,090) between March 20, 1995, and March 22, 1998.

27. **DAMON WASHINGTON**, 28, of Manhattan, has been employed by DOT as an assistant highway repairer for the last 6 years, earning \$32,254 in City salary. WASHINGTON was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 28 days of unemployment benefits (\$1,725) between March 20, 1995, and March 29, 1998.

28. **TAMELA WILLIAMS-SAMUEL**, 33, of the Bronx, has been employed by DOH as a public health advisor for the last 6 years, and earns \$14 per hour. WILLIAMS-SAMUEL was charged with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree for fraudulently collecting 40 days of unemployment benefits (\$1,125) between September 1, 1996, and January 5, 1997.