



Department of Investigation

Press Release

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PRESS RELEASE

19 CURRENT AND FORMER NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING INSPECTORS CHARGED WITH TAKING BRIBES

ALAN VINEGRAD, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, and **ROSE GILL HEARN**, Commissioner, New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced the filing of charges against a total of nineteen Department of Buildings ("DOB") employees, including eighteen current and former DOB Plumbing Inspectors, and one former DOB Boiler Inspector, for extorting bribes in exchange for providing inspection approvals on plumbing projects throughout New York City. Five of the nineteen defendants were supervisory inspectors. Seventeen of the charged inspectors were arrested earlier this morning.

The defendant inspectors worked in DOB offices in all five boroughs of New York City. Those arrested include NEIL MUCCIO, the Administrative Chief Plumbing Inspector; GEORGE FRIEDLANDER, the Chief Plumbing Inspector for Brooklyn; EMANUEL LAURIA, the Chief Plumbing Inspector for the Bronx; SAM CARAVELLO, the Chief Plumbing Inspector for Manhattan; and JOHN ROSENBERG, the Chief

Plumbing Inspector for Queens. The plumbing inspectors charged today include 15 of the 24 plumbing inspectors currently employed by the city.

The New York City Administrative Code requires plumbing work either to be inspected at various stages by city inspectors, or to be self-certified by a licensed master plumber subject to "spot checks" by city inspectors. At each inspection, the licensed master plumber or his designee must meet with the plumbing inspector, who approves the work if it meets New York City Code requirements. These approvals are known as "sign offs."

According to the complaints unsealed in United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York in Brooklyn this morning, between the early 1990s and 2001, the inspectors charged today extorted cash payments totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars. In exchange for bribes, the inspectors in many instances approved plumbing work without performing an inspection at all. On occasion, in return for cash payments from a cooperating contractor, the inspectors did not even leave their vehicles before signing off on projects, and one inspector signed off on two projects over coffee at a doughnut shop instead of performing the inspections. In other cases, the inspectors performed inspections but overlooked various violations.

During the course of the investigation, a cooperating contractor, under the supervision of DOI investigators, wore a recording device, met with DOB inspectors and made cash payments to them. The DOI investigative team obtained over one hundred hours of recorded conversations between the contractor and 13 of the plumbing inspectors and the boiler inspector charged in the present cases. In addition, during the investigation the cooperating contractor made 69 payoffs to these 13 plumbing inspectors and the boiler inspector, ranging from \$50 to \$600 and totaling approximately \$9,000. As part of the investigation, investigators interviewed numerous other contractors who have admitted to paying bribes to the charged inspectors since the early 1990s.

The complaints charge each defendant with extortion – unlawfully obtaining money under color of official right – in violation of the Hobbs Act, 18 U.S.C. 1951, a crime carrying a maximum sentence of twenty years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.¹

In announcing the charges and arrests, United States Attorney **ALAN VINEGRAD** stated, "It is essential to the integrity of inspection process that the inspections actually be conducted, and that they be conducted fairly, impartially, and uniformly. Government approvals are not for sale. The unlawful use of government authority and the receipt of bribes will not be tolerated." **Mr. VINEGRAD** thanked the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Department of Labor, and the New York City Police Department for their assistance in the investigation.

New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner **ROSE GILL HEARN** stated: "These inspectors sold the integrity of their office. I pledge the full resources of my office to identify, target and end the corrupt relationship between city inspectors and members of the public."

New York City Department of Buildings **Commissioner PATRICIA J. LANCASTER** stated: "By means of aggressive initiatives, promoting greater efficiency, thoroughly screening prospective employees, focusing on deterrents and detection, and working towards achieving stiffer sentences through the legal system, the agency can entirely change the climate that favored corruption for too long."

DOB has initiated the process to terminate the employment of each of the charged currently employed inspectors.

The defendants who were arrested this morning will be arraigned this afternoon by United

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States Magistrate Judge Marilyn D. Go at the U. S. Courthouse, 225 Cadman Plaza East, Brooklyn, New York.

The investigation leading to today's arrests was conducted by the New York City Department of Investigation. The government's case will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Richard Faughnan and Peter Katz, and Special Assistant United

States Attorney Joseph Reda, Examining Attorney, New York City Department of Investigation.

The Defendants:

SAM CARAVELLO

Title: Chief Plumbing Inspector, Manhattan

DOB: 12/07/51

Residence: Brooklyn, NY

ROBERT CHAIT

Title: Plumbing Inspector, Manhattan

DOB: 7/23/30

Residence: Nassau County, NY

THOMAS DEGOSKI

Title: Plumbing Inspector, Brooklyn (retired 3/02)

DOB: 08/13/46

Residence: Queens, NY

ANTHONY DIBERANDINO

Title: Plumbing Inspector, Staten Island

DOB: 09/25/58

Residence: Staten Island, NY

FRANKO DOBRIC

Title: ASST. Chief Plumbing Inspector, Queens

DOB: 07/24/48

Residence: Queens, NY

STEVEN FERRARA

Title: Plumbing Inspector, Bronx

DOB: 04/08/58

Residence: Suffolk County, NY

GEORGE FRIEDLANDER

Title: Chief Plumbing Inspector, Brooklyn

DOB: 11/28/39

Residence: Staten Island, NY

VERNON GILES

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Title:Plumbing Inspector, Queens (retired 9/01)
DOB:5/93
Residence:Queens, NY

JOHN HANSEN
Title:Plumbing Inspector, Manhattan
DOB:12/03/60
Residence: Nassau County, NY

MARTIN LARA
Title: Plumbing Inspector, Manhattan
DOB: 11/13/53
Residence: Brooklyn, NY

EMANUEL LAURIA
Title: Chief Plumbing Inspector, Bronx
DOB: 10/31/41
Residence: Bronx, NY

NEIL MUCCIO
Title: Administrative Chief Plumbing Inspector
DOB: 6/29/40
Residence: Brooklyn, NY

CARLOS PEREZ
Title: Boiler Inspector (retired 6/01)
DOB: 02/17/37
Residence: Queens, NY

JOHN ROSENBERG
Title: Chief Plumbing Inspector, Queens
DOB: 06/30/98
Residence: Suffolk County, NY

DANIEL SACKNOFF
Title: Plumbing Inspector, Brooklyn
DOB: 09/27/39
Residence: Brooklyn, NY

GREGORY SAHAKIAN
Title: Plumbing Inspector, Queens
DOB: 07/09/52
Residence: Queens, NY

FRANK SGAMBATI
Title: Plumbing Inspector, Bronx
DOB: 05/13/46
Residence: Queens, NY

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CARL TERMINE

Title: Plumbing Inspector, Brooklyn

DOB: 08/07/34

Residence: Staten Island, NY

JOSEPH TRUC

Title: Chief Plumbing Inspector, Queens (retired 6/01)

DOB: 09/20/42

Residence: Westchester County, NY