



Department of Investigation

Press Release

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TWO BROOKLYN WOMEN INDICTED IN \$120K "IDENTITY" FRAUD

-- Used Names & SS Numbers Of NYC Employees & Kingsborough College Student To Buy Carpeting, Computer, Lingerie, Metro Cards, Mattresses & Las Vegas Trip --

EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), and CHARLES J. HYNES, Brooklyn District Attorney, joined by NEAL L. COHEN, M.D., Commissioner of the Department of Health (DOH), NICHOLAS SCOPPETTA, Commissioner of the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), and BYRON MCCLENNEY, President of Kingsborough Community College (KCC), today announced the indictment of DIANE CRAWFORD, "a/k/a" DIANE IVERSON, a former WEP maintenance worker assigned to DOH offices in Manhattan, and TINA TUCKER, a former KCC student, for stealing, in separate identity theft scams, over \$120,000 by using personal ID information of at least 10 DOH and ACS employees and a former KCC student, to fraudulently obtain various credit cards and department store charge cards and using them, without authorization, to purchase assorted merchandise--including bill-payer checks, carpeting, a computer, fancy lingerie, Metro cards, and mattresses--and to vacation in Las Vegas.

Commissioner Kuriansky said, "Identity theft is a serious and rapidly growing crime, which wreaks havoc on the daily lives of its victims and can sabotage their credit ratings for years to come. The two defendants charged here are accused of preying upon unwitting City employees and a former college student, swiping their good names and personal data, and then illicitly acquiring tens of thousands of dollars in goods and services."

District Attorney Hynes said, "To underscore the vulnerability of the public to identity fraud, one need only recall the motto of the New York Lottery, 'All you need is a dollar and a dream.' When it comes to identity fraud, the motto should be, 'All you need is a name, a social security number and a scheme.'"

Commissioner Cohen said, "This investigation represents a model of effective inter-agency collaboration. Thanks to the efforts of the Departments of Health and Investigation, the Police Department, the Administration for Children's Services, and the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, City workers can rest easier knowing that the defendants in question will face prosecution."

Commissioner Scoppetta said, "I hope today's indictment sends a strong message to those involved in identity fraud. Because of the fine work by Commissioner Kuriansky and his staff at the Department of Investigation and District Attorney Hynes and his staff in Brooklyn, the two women

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whose indictment was announced today were finally brought to justice. I want to thank all of the individuals whose hard work resulted in today's indictments."

President McClenney said, "The reprehensible activities involved in this case serve as vivid reminders of our precious rights to privacy. The faculty and staff of Kingsborough Community College join me in condemning the theft of student records from the college. We want to thank the NYPD and the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office for their great work."

According to Commissioner Kuriansky and District Attorney Hynes, the CRAWFORD investigation began in December 1999, when one of the victims, a DOH physician assistant, complained to DOI that her name, birth date, and Social Security number had been improperly used by someone to open 2 department store charge accounts and 1 credit card account, and then to buy over \$5,000 in various consumer goods.

The investigation disclosed that the DOH employee first learned that her identity had been stolen, when 3 different collection agencies, representing Bloomingdales and Saks department stores in New York City, and the Household Bank, in Wilmington, Delaware, contacted her and demanded payment of past due charges for purchases totaling \$5,092. She told the various collection agency representatives that she had never authorized anyone to open a charge or credit card account in her name, that she had no connection to anyone residing at 769 Thomas S. Boyland Street in Brooklyn, where all of the merchandise had been delivered, and did not know an individual named DIANE CRAWFORD, who was listed on each of the 3 accounts as an authorized signatory.

The investigation subsequently revealed additional victims, including: a DOH public health assistant, who was billed \$3,799 by Sears, \$412 by Conesco, and \$1,422 by Visa, for a total of \$5,633; an ACS grants clerk, billed \$1,223 by J.C. Penney, \$3,200 by Associated Capital Bank of Salt Lake City, Utah, including \$1,882 for a mattress, and \$624 by Ashley Stewart stores, for a total of \$5,047; an ACS associate accountant, billed \$4,987 by Aspire Visa for 2 bill-payer convenience checks, and by Associates Capital Bank and Next credit card for various charges ranging from \$28 to \$3,295, including thousands of dollars worth of carpeting from Pitkin Carpet in Brooklyn, for a total of \$10,426; and a CUNY-Hunter College student loan coordinator billed \$1,584 by Visa, \$605 by Discover, \$866 by Capital One Bank, \$722 by Spiegel, \$800 by Visa Provider, and \$5,354 by Select Comfort bedding, for a total of \$9,931.

Inside CRAWFORD's residence, investigators also recovered lists with dozens of individuals' names and Social Security numbers, numerous bogus credit cards, and a cocktail lounge credit card receipt and a casino gambling "player's card" from the Riviera Hotel and Casino, indicating that in September 1999 she had taken a vacation trip to Las Vegas.

The TUCKER investigation began in January 2001, when a U.S. Postal Service inspector alerted the DA's Rackets Division to TUCKER's alleged involvement in ID fraud.

Several months later, in July 2001, one of TUCKER's alleged victims, a former KCC student, learned that, without her permission, a "hold" had been placed on her incoming mail at the U.S. Postal Service's Fort Hamilton branch in Brooklyn, near her residence. The victim went to the branch post office, where she found numerous bills and invoices for various purchases, which had accumulated in the weeks since the mail hold started, including a \$1,362 invoice for a Gateway computer. The invoice contained a delivery address, the Golden Gate Motel on Shore Parkway in Sheepshead Bay, near KCC. The victim notified police, who went to the motel and found TUCKER,

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who was charging a \$90-a-night room to an American Express credit card, which she had fraudulently obtained in the victim's name. Police also recovered over 50 KCC student files, containing student names, addresses, and Social Security numbers. Investigators learned that TUCKER, for one semester in the Spring 1995, had attended KCC, where the victim matriculated in the early 90s.

The investigation disclosed that TUCKER had used the victim's personal information to obtain American Express, Visa, and other credit cards. The receipts indicated that TUCKER had used the American Express credit card to charge a \$558 U.S. Airways flight to Jacksonville, Florida; obtain \$1,400 worth of AMEX gift "cheques;" buy hundreds of dollars worth of NYC Metro cards; and make thousands of dollars in purchases of various merchandise from numerous Brooklyn retailers, including Macy's, the Gap, and Victoria's Secret, totaling over \$20,000. Investigators are reviewing the receipts and other documents recovered from the motel room in order to find the identity of additional victims.

CRAWFORD, 53, of 769 Thomas S. Boyland Street in Brooklyn, was charged with Forgery in the Second Degree, Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, and Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, all Class D felonies; Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree and Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, both Class E felonies; and Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Third Degree and Petit Larceny, both Class A misdemeanors. If convicted, she faces up to 7 years in prison.

TUCKER, 23, formerly of 794 Woodfield Road in Hempstead, New York, was charged with Forgery in the Second Degree and Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, both Class D felonies, and Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, a Class E felony. If convicted, she faces up to 7 years in prison.

Commissioner Kuriansky and District Attorney Hynes expressed their sincere appreciation to DOH Commissioner Cohen, ACS Commissioner Scoppetta, and President McClenney, and members of their staffs, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

The investigations were conducted by DOI's Inspector General for DOH Kyle Sturken, and members of his staff, including Special Investigator Bradley Howard, and U.S. Postal Inspection Service Inspectors Richard Vignogna and James Antonino.

The Office of District Attorney Hynes is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorneys Karen Turner and Peter Zanolin, under the supervision of Deputy Bureau Chief Jeffrey Ferguson, of the DA's Rackets Division, are handling the matter.