



Department of Investigation

Press Release

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DOI ARRESTS ELEVATOR COMPANY OWNER FOR FORGING PERMITS FOR BROOKLYN AMUSEMENT PARK ROLLER COASTER *7-YEAR-OLD BOY'S LATER ACCIDENT SPURS INQUIRY*

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 4, 1999 -- EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the felony arrest of JOSEPH LICHTMAN, the president of Brooklyn Queens Elevator Corp., for providing S&E Kids N Action Company, an indoor amusement park at 1149 McDonald Avenue in the Borough Park section of Brooklyn, with a phony Department of Buildings (DOB) permit to operate a mini-roller coaster at the park, and with later actually submitting a forged ride permit application to the Buildings Department.

Commissioner Kuriansky noted that, unbeknownst to S&E Kids, the roller coaster permit application filed by LICHTMAN on its behalf was ultimately rejected by DOB in February 1998. However, on June 4, 1998, in an unrelated incident, a 7-year-old Brooklyn boy suffered a severe leg injury while boarding the ride. When DOB inspectors investigated the accident, they discovered the bogus permit LICHTMAN had previously provided to S&E Kids and notified DOI. Thereafter, S&E Kids properly obtained a permit to operate the roller coaster after hiring another elevator firm to file the necessary paperwork.

According to the Felony Complaint, on September 7, 1997, Steven Shammah, the owner of S&E Kids N Action, hired LICHTMAN to prepare and file an application with DOB for a permit to operate a mini-roller coaster ride at his amusement park. Two months later, LICHTMAN telephoned Shammah to say that he had filed the application and that DOB had issued a permit. A few days after the phone call, on November 26, 1997, Shammah received by fax from Brooklyn Queens Elevator Corp. what purported to be a copy of the approved application. The faxed copy was stamped "Department of Building Permit Issued Oct. 17, 1997" and "Certification Elevator Div., Department of Building." After receiving the document, Shammah began operation of the roller coaster. A subsequent check of DOB records, however, revealed that the application had never been approved, nor had a permit been issued to operate the ride.

The Complaint further charges that, thereafter, on February 10, 1998, LICHTMAN did, in fact, submit an application for the roller coaster ride to DOB, to which was affixed the Registered Architect's seal of Franklyn Estrella and which was purportedly signed by both Estrella and George Nita, a director at LICHTMAN's company. DOI's investigation revealed, however, that the two signatures were forgeries and that the architect's seal had been used without his permission or authority.

LICHTMAN, 31, of 444 Argyle Road, Cedarhurst, Long Island, is the owner and president of Brooklyn Queens Elevator Corp., located at 825 Caton Avenue in Brooklyn.

LICHTMAN was charged with Forgery in the Second Degree, Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in

the Second Degree, and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree. If convicted, he faces up to 7 years in prison.

The investigation was conducted by Dennis Curran, DOI's Inspector General for the Department of Buildings, and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspector General Joseph Ferraro and Special Investigator Yves Désiré.

The Office of Brooklyn District Attorney Charles J. Hynes is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Frank Laudadio is handling the matter.