



Department of Investigation

Press Release

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QUEENS ECB CASHIER ARRESTED FOR STEALING \$250 IN CITY FINES

EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the felony arrest of KENNETH TUCKER, a City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) cashier, for stealing \$250 by misappropriating 3 money orders submitted by litigants to pay Environmental Control Board (ECB) fines, making false entries in DEP records to cover up the thefts, and then fraudulently cashed the money orders.

According to Commissioner Kuriansky, the ECB is the administrative tribunal which holds hearings on notices of violations (NOVs) issued by City enforcement agencies for various quality-of-life violations. The agencies served by the ECB include the Departments of Buildings, Environmental Protection, Fire, Health, Sanitation, and Transportation. TUCKER was an employee at the ECB office at 144-06 94th Avenue in Jamaica, Queens, which annually adjudicates about 600,000 summonses, and can impose, for various infractions, fines ranging from \$25 to \$25,000. TUCKER's job was to collect checks and money orders from litigants paying fines, issue them receipts, and then enter the payments manually into DEP records.

The investigation began in December 2000, when ECB officials notified DOI that 2 ECB litigants had complained that, although they had paid their ECB fines, they were still receiving dunning notices. Both litigants provided ECB copies of the money orders they had submitted to TUCKER to pay their fines, together with the purported ECB receipts that TUCKER had issued to them.

The investigation disclosed that, on July 24, 2000, and subsequently on August 21, 2000, 2 separate ECB litigants submitted to TUCKER, at his direction, blank \$100 Travelers Express money orders as payment for separate Sanitation Department violations, one for littering and another for failure to recycle.

The investigation further revealed that TUCKER issued a fake ECB payment receipt to each of the litigants, created false entries in DEP records to conceal the thefts, filled out the 2 blank money orders, naming himself as the payee, and then fraudulently negotiated them. TUCKER, when interviewed subsequently by DOI investigators, admitted that he had also taken a 3rd money order worth \$50, and that he had negotiated all 3 money orders at Joey's Check Cashing, at 146-15 Jamaica Avenue in Queens Village, nearby the ECB office.

TUCKER, 44, of 470 Ocean Avenue in Brooklyn, an ECB cashier for 2 years and a DEP employee since October 17, 1988, who was earning \$25,983 a year, has been suspended. He was charged with Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree, a Class E felony, and Petit Larceny, a Class A misdemeanor. If convicted, he faces up to 4 years in prison.

Commissioner Kuriansky expressed his sincere appreciation to DEP Commissioner Joel A. Miele, Sr., P.E., and members of his staff, for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by Clive Morricks, DOI's Inspector General for DEP, and Examining Attorney Karen Erivona.

The case is being prosecuted by the Office of Queens District Attorney Richard A Brown. Assistant District Attorney Yvonne Creque, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney James Liander, Chief of the DA's Integrity Bureau, and, under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco, is handling the matter.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.