



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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DOB INSPECTORS NOTIFY DOI OF BRIBE OFFERS; DOI MAKES 9 ARRESTS

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced the arrests today of nine individuals on charges of paying bribes and giving unlawful gratuities to New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) Inspectors during the past eleven months in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island. Although the defendants are charged with making illegal cash payoffs, the DOB inspectors whom they allegedly paid had already reported being offered bribes at the defendants' premises and in accepting the payments were cooperating with DOI investigators to gather the evidence of the corrupt offers.

The defendants include a building superintendent, two dry cleaners, three contractors, a restaurant owner, and a homeowner. The arrests were the result of seven separate investigations, all initiated after DOI received reports of bribe offers from DOB inspectors. Most of the illegal payments were made to induce the DOB inspectors to overlook violations they discovered during inspections of commercial and residential properties throughout the City. All the DOB inspectors cooperated with DOI investigators in gathering evidence against the bribe givers. The illegal cash payments ranged from \$45 to \$3,000.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "Paying off a City Buildings inspector to overlook a violation is a crime that can result in arrest and a prison sentence and is therefore an exceedingly foolish idea. Because corruption of DOB's inspections would jeopardize public safety, DOI investigators have made a concerted effort to gain the cooperation of DOB inspectors in reporting all bribe offers. These arrests show that the message has been received. I thank and congratulate the DOB inspectors who stood up for their own integrity, and I pledge DOI's continued even-handed enforcement of the laws prohibiting corruption." Commissioner Gill Hearn also thanked DOB Commissioner Patricia J. Lancaster for her and DOB's assistance in the investigation and for encouraging all DOB employees to cooperate with DOI.

The following is a synopsis of each of the incidents:

Manhattan Arrests:

On October 9, 2007, DAVID LIMA, 38, of Manhattan, allegedly paid a \$2,000 bribe to a DOB inspector in exchange for the inspector's refraining from issuing criminal court summonses for unlicensed electrical work at 69 West 107th Street in Manhattan, where Lima is the superintendent.

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On January 7, 2008 Lima allegedly made an additional payment of \$1,000 to the same DOB inspector to induce the inspector to close out all of the complaints for the same building. LIMA is charged with two counts of Bribery in the Third Degree, a class D felony. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

On December 5, 2007, HYUN HAN, 45, of Queens, employed at Alice's Dry Cleaners, 74 2nd Avenue Manhattan, allegedly gave \$200 to a DOB inspector whose inspection revealed high carbon monoxide readings from the store's boiler. A subsequent re-inspection of that location on January 18, 2008 allegedly resulted in a second payoff to the same DOB inspector, by the cleaners' owner, CHAN CHOI, 46, of Queens, who allegedly gave the DOB inspector an additional \$200 after the inspector found traces of carbon monoxide emissions coming from the boiler. HAN and CHOI are each charged with Giving Unlawful Gratuities, a class A misdemeanor, which upon conviction, is punishable by a prison sentence of up to one year.

On February 21, 2008, IZET SABOVIC, 43, of Queens, a supervisor with Euro Fit Corporation, a subcontractor working for Stellar Management at 501 West 110 Street, Manhattan, allegedly supplied his employee, DENIS KOLASINAC, 43, of Yonkers, with \$1,500 to bribe a DOB inspector to overlook violations and a stop work order at 501 West 110 Street. KOLASINAC allegedly then paid the bribe to a cooperating DOB inspector. SABOVIC and KOLASINAC are charged with Bribery in the Third Degree, a class D felony. If convicted, each faces up to seven years in prison.

Also on February 21, 2008, DANIEL TALASSAZAN, 35, of Great Neck, a contractor working at 256 West 38 Street, Manhattan, allegedly offered and gave \$500 to a DOB inspector to induce the inspector to refrain from issuing violations for construction and electrical work being performed without a permit. TALASSAZAN is charged with Bribery in the Third Degree, a class D felony. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

The office of New York County District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau will prosecute the Manhattan cases.

Brooklyn Arrest:

On November 9, 2007, BRYAN LEWIS, 50, of Brooklyn, allegedly paid \$500 to a DOB inspector so that the inspector would not issue Environmental Control Board violations for illegal electrical work being performed without a permit in a renovation of a restaurant that Lewis owns at 4410 Avenue H in Brooklyn. LEWIS is charged with Bribery in the Third Degree, a class D felony. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

The office of Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes will prosecute the case.

Queens Arrest:

On March 4, 2008, ABDUL HASHEM, 47, the owner of a house at 90-27 170th Street, Jamaica, Queens, allegedly paid a \$100 bribe to a DOB inspector so that the inspector, who was responding to a complaint of an illegal basement and attic in the house, would remove the complaint without inspecting the residence. HASHEM is charged with Bribery in the Third Degree, a class D felony. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

The office of Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown will prosecute the case.

Staten Island Arrest:

On May 29, 2007, JUNG TAE LEE, 59, of Staten Island and the owner of Amboy Cleaners, 4361 Amboy Road, Staten Island, allegedly gave a \$45 bribe to an inspector so that the inspector would overlook a violation at that establishment. LEE is charged with Bribery in the Third Degree, a class D felony. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

The office of Richmond County District Attorney Daniel Donovan, Jr. will prosecute the case.

DOB Commissioner Patricia J. Lancaster made the following statement: "Today's arrests demonstrate the dedication of the Buildings Department staff to upholding our integrity policies. Attempting to offer bribes to Buildings employees will not be tolerated. I look forward to continuing our cooperative efforts with the Department of Investigation to eradicate criminal wrongdoing within the construction industry," said Commissioner Lancaster. "I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn for her full commitment to our partnership and routing out corruption in the construction industry."

This investigation was conducted by DOI's Inspector General for DOB, Michael Carroll, and his staff. Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked District Attorneys Morgenthau, Hynes, Brown, and Donovan for their assistance.

Criminal complaints and arrest charges are accusations. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City.

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To report someone ripping off the City, call DOI at (212) 825-5959.**