



The City of New York
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**HPD HOUSING INSPECTOR ARRESTED BY DOI WHILE ATTENDING
CORRUPTION PREVENTION LECTURE AND CHARGED WITH ALLEGEDLY
ACCEPTING \$100 CASH AND OVERLOOKING HOUSING VIOLATION**

--Housing inspector was arrested in 2003 for a similar offense--

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), announced today the arrest of JAMES HUGHES, a housing inspector with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), for allegedly accepting \$100 cash from a DOI undercover investigator posing as a homeowner. Hughes took the money and did not issue a violation for hazardous conditions created by an illegal basement apartment.

HUGHES, 58, of Queens, an HPD employee since 1981 who receives a salary of \$45,982 a year, was arrested and charged with Receiving Reward for Official Misconduct in the Second Degree, a class E felony; Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree, a class E felony; Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a class E felony; Receiving Unlawful Gratuities, a class A misdemeanor; and Official Misconduct, a class A misdemeanor. If convicted, Hughes faces up to four years in prison.

DOI arrested Hughes today during a corruption prevention lecture being given by DOI to HPD staff members at the Queens Borough Office of HPD. Corruption prevention lectures began in 2002 as a proactive effort by DOI to educate City employees about their obligation to report corruption and the protections afforded to employees when they do so. Since 2002, DOI has presented hundreds of these lectures. This fiscal year, DOI has conducted more than 350 corruption prevention lectures for nearly 10,000 individuals at a variety of City agencies.

Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "DOI arrested Hughes once before. He was terminated from HPD but then reinstated. Now we have arrested him again. Apparently, he didn't learn his lesson the first time around. As a result, he faces serious consequences, including possible prison time. Housing inspectors are entrusted with protecting the public by ensuring hazardous conditions are immediately addressed. Accepting money for overlooking a housing violation not only places the public at risk but is against the law. Hopefully, we will see him removed from HPD once and for all."

This is not the first time Hughes has been arrested for taking cash on the job. In 2003, DOI conducted an investigation of Hughes that established that while working at HPD's Queens Code Enforcement office, he accepted money from individuals requesting HPD records regarding building violations. Rather than directing the individuals to pay the cashier, Hughes accepted the money and placed it in his pocket. Hughes was arrested by DOI in November 2003 and was prosecuted by the Queens County District Attorney's Office. While the case was pending in criminal court, HPD terminated Hughes' employment in February 2004. He appealed the decision and Arbitrator Susan R. Meredith ultimately ruled that although Hughes had violated HPD rules by accepting the money, there was insufficient evidence to show that he accepted the money for personal gain. In May 2005, the arbitrator ordered that Hughes be reinstated to his position at HPD. One week later he pleaded guilty to Official Misconduct, a class A misdemeanor, which is an acknowledgment that he accepted the fees to benefit himself. He was sentenced in 2005, ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine and given a conditional discharge.

He attended a corruption prevention lecture given by DOI in August 2006.

In January 2007, undercover DOI investigators posed as owners of properties with housing violations in order to determine if HPD inspectors would properly report these violations. On January 22, 2007, Hughes went to a home in Queens to address a complaint involving lack of heat and hot water. While in the basement of the house, Hughes met with the undercover investigator posing as a homeowner and observed that the home had an illegal basement apartment. Hughes offered not to report this hazardous condition and then accepted \$100 from the undercover investigator. Hughes also failed to address the initial complaint that had brought him to the location. Hughes then submitted a report to HPD falsely stating that there was no basis for the complaint regarding the lack of heat and hot water. He also failed to report the illegal basement apartment to HPD.

The investigation was conducted by Inspector General Joseph P. Piazza and Assistant Inspector General Joseph Medina under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Vincent Green. Assistant District Attorney Daniel O'Leary, from the office of Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown, is prosecuting the case.

Criminal complaints 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.

***Get the worms out of the Big Apple.
To report someone ripping off the city, call DOI at (212) 825-5959.***