



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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**DOI ANNOUNCES ARRESTS OF TWO SENIOR UPSTATE DEP EMPLOYEES FOR
POSSESSION OF STOLEN DEP PROPERTY**

-- Items included new computers, generators and an outboard engine --

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), announced today the arrest of two high-ranking employees of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for stealing more than \$10,000 worth of DEP property, including computers, generators, power tools, and outboard motors. DOI investigators recovered the stolen property from the defendants' homes in Dutchess and Rockland Counties, respectively.

JAMES D. BENSON, 52, of Pawling, NY, was charged Wednesday with Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Third Degree, a D Felony punishable by up to seven years in prison. Benson is Director, Division of SEQRA Coordination and Watershed Management Programs. SEQRA is the State Environmental Quality Review Act. He is also a Councilman for the Town of Pawling.

LAMBERTO S. SANTOS, P.E., 55, of Monsey, New York, was charged Wednesday with Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, an E Felony punishable by up to four years in prison. Santos is a Civil Engineer for DEP's Operations & Engineering Section for the Bureau of Water Supply. Santos reported to Benson, and the two had worked together at DEP's upstate headquarters since they both were hired in 1992.

DOI's investigation began when DEP reported that several new computers and other DEP property, valued in excess of \$12,000, were missing from DEP's upstate headquarters in Valhalla, New York. Following a lead, investigators went to Benson's house to interview him. While there, they observed stolen DEP property and firearms inside the house.

Investigators from DOI and the Dutchess County Sheriff's office conducted a search of Benson's residence in Pawling and recovered DEP property including, several new Dell computers in their original boxes, an IBM ThinkPad laptop computer, a 3500-watt Honda portable generator, night vision goggles, an electric cold water pressure washer, a 1000-watt twin head halogen work light, machete knife and leather sheath, DEP uniforms, a new DEP fax machine, and several power tools. In addition, investigators recovered numerous firearms, including several that were loaded and lying in plain view. These weapons have been confiscated pending further investigation.

DOI investigators searched Santos's residence in Monsey and recovered DEP property including: 8-horsepower outboard marine motor, a 3500-watt Honda portable generator, a 1000-watt twin head halogen work light, a Panasonic Reciprocating Saw, a Dell 20-inch computer LCD flat screen, and an IBM laptop computer.

This investigation is ongoing.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "Taxpayer money is supposed to be used to protect the watershed, educate kids and make our streets safer. It's not supposed to be used, as it was in this case, to help outfit a City employee's home. In their greedy scheme to defraud DEP, these two individuals have betrayed the public's trust."

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked the Dutchess County Sheriff's Office and the Town of Ramapo Police Department for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

This investigation was conducted by DOI's Inspector General for DEP John B. Kantor and members of his staff, including Chief Investigator Michael Carroll.

The office of the Dutchess County District Attorney William V. Grady is handling Benson's case and the office of the Rockland County District Attorney Michael E. Bongiorno is handling Santos' 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.***