



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation  
ROSE GILL HEARN  
COMMISSIONER

80 MAIDEN LANE  
NEW YORK, NY 10038  
212-825-5900

Release #76-2009  
[nyc.gov/html/doi](http://nyc.gov/html/doi)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 2009**

**CONTACT: DIANE STRUZZI**  
**(212) 825-5931**

**DOI STATEMENT ON THE ARREST OF FORMER BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE  
CHARGED WITH PARTICIPATING IN A COUNTERFEIT CHECK SCHEME**

ZENA JOHNSON, a former Quality Control Coordinator with the City Department of Buildings ("DOB"), was arrested today on charges of copying checks submitted by individuals paying for DOB permit renewals and alteration repair applications, and then sharing those copies with other criminal associates who produced counterfeit checks. According to the criminal complaint, JOHNSON gave at least 50 copied checks to two co-conspirators in exchange for cash payments and the co-conspirators cashed more than \$50,000 in counterfeit checks. DOI and the New York Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation worked together on this case, which is being prosecuted by the office of the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York.

DOI's investigation began after it was notified about a number of forged signatures on checks that had been submitted to DOB.

JOHNSON, 29, of the Bronx has been charged with Bank Fraud and Conspiracy to Commit Bank Fraud. Upon conviction, each of these federal offenses is punishable by up to 30 years in prison.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "This former DOB employee is charged with stealing the private banking information of customers doing business with the City as part of a counterfeiting scheme. Any City employee who abuses his or her position to defraud others risks his or her job and future. DOI, the FBI, and federal prosecutors worked together to untangle this financial scam and hold accountable those responsible."

JOHNSON began working at DOB in June 2000. As a Quality Control Coordinator, she was responsible for, among other tasks, auditing the work of cashiers and clerks who processed checks submitted to DOB. She was receiving an annual salary of approximately \$37,160 when she resigned in May 2009.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn thanked Acting U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Lev L. Dassin, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's New York Office Joseph M. Demarest, Jr., DOB Commissioner Robert LiMandri, and their staffs, for their assistance in this investigation.

This investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of Inspector General for DOB, including Inspector General Michael Carroll and Assistant Inspector General Byron Biggerstaff and members of their staff.

Assistant United States Attorney Amie N. Ely from the Office of the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District New York has been assigned to prosecute 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.*

**DOI's press releases can also be found at [twitter.com/doinews](http://twitter.com/doinews)  
Get the worms out of the Big Apple. To report someone ripping off the City, call DOI at (212) 825-5959.**