

DISTRICT ATTORNEY - NEW YORK COUNTY

NEWS RELEASE
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Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau announced today the indictment of two men on charges that they falsified applications to obtain trade licenses issued by the New York City Department of Buildings by overstating their qualifications for the licenses.

SERGEI DENKO and DAVID CONNELL were both charged with multiple counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree in connection with statements they made about their employment experience on applications for Master Fire Suppression Piping Contractor licenses. In addition to the false filing charges, CONNELL was charged with three counts of Forgery in the Second Degree. DENKO was also charged with Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree in connection with applications he filed to be a Master Plumber.

Both DENKO and CONNELL falsely stated on their applications that they had worked under the supervision of licensees when they had not. It is a requirement to obtain both Master Plumber and Master Fire Suppression Piping Contractor licenses to have worked under the supervision of a licensee for a certain period of years. In addition, CONNELL forged three letters purportedly written by individuals attesting to his experience under the supervision of a licensee who had not in fact supervised him.

The Master Fire Suppression Piping Contractor license is a trade license issued by the New York City Department of Buildings. The New York City Building Code provides that a Master Fire Suppression Piping Contractor is someone who is authorized to "install, maintain, repair, modify, extend or alter fire suppression piping systems in the City of New York." Such systems include sprinkler and standpipe systems.

Mr. Morgenthau said, "Obviously, fire suppression systems are critical to public safety. It is extremely important that licenses be granted only to qualified professionals. Individuals who obtain licenses by falsifying their applications are putting lives at risk in the event of a fire."

New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "These individuals were entrusted with keeping the public safe by installing fire suppression systems in the City. Instead, as these troubling allegations show, they misrepresented their qualifications and evaded the City's requirements for licensing fire suppression contractors. In the case of Sergei Denko, the City must now re-inspect each of the approximately 95 jobs he worked and DOI has notified the Buildings Department regarding the sites that need to be re-inspected. This case underscores the commitment by

DOI and the Manhattan District Attorney's Office to pursue individuals who try to skirt the regulations that ensure professional standards and protect the public."

DENKO is self-employed as the president of Denko Mechanical, a Brooklyn-based plumbing and fire suppression company. CONNELL is supervisor plumber of the City College of New York.

The New York City Department of Investigation conducted the investigation and referred the matter to the Manhattan District Attorney's Office. The Inspectors General for the New York City Department of Buildings and the New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services had conducted a joint audit of applications filed for the Master Fire Suppression Piping Contractor licenses. At the time that DENKO and CONNELL applied for the licenses, the New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) administered the licensing examination and conducted the background investigation, while the New York City Department of Buildings issued the licenses. One of DENKO's falsified Licensed Master Plumber applications was discovered in connection with a routine background investigation, while the other falsified Licensed Master Plumber application was discovered during an investigation into his Master Fire Suppression Piping Contractor license application.

DENKO is charged with six counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree. CONNELL is charged with four counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree and three counts of Forgery in the Second Degree. Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree is a class E felony, which is punishable by up to four years in prison. Forgery in the Second Degree is a class D felony, which is punishable by up to seven years in prison.

Assistant District Attorney Daniel G. Cort, Deputy Bureau Chief of the Rackets Bureau, and Special Assistant District Attorney Cristina Lynn Fernandez, an attorney with the New York City Department of Buildings Special Investigations Unit, presented the case to the grand jury under the supervision of Rackets Bureau Chief Patrick Dugan. Chief of Investigations Barry Romm of the Department of Buildings Special Investigations Unit and Department of Investigation Confidential Investigator Jacqueline Maquine conducted the investigation under the supervision of Robert Joyce, Department of Investigation Associate Commissioner and John Woods, Inspector General for the New York City Department of Buildings.

Mr. Morgenthau thanked Rose Gill Hearn, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation, Patricia Lancaster, FAIA, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Buildings, and Martha Hirst, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services, and her staff for their assistance in this investigation.

Defendant Information

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