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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, February 27, 2018

**Defendant Who Operated Shadow Utility Company that Illegally Installed Gas Meters Pleads Guilty to Enterprise Corruption**

*To Receive 2 1/3 to 7 Years in State Prison*

Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez, together with New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Mark G. Peters, today announced that a former National Grid employee, who became the architect of a shadow utility company that illegally installed gas meters in violation of safety protocols by infiltrating the public utility and corrupted some of its employees has pleaded guilty to enterprise corruption.

District Attorney Gonzalez said, “With today’s guilty plea this defendant admits to his role as the mastermind of this unique and unprecedented enterprise that has now been uncovered and dismantled thanks to the work of investigators and prosecutors. As Brooklyn property values continue to rise we will be vigilant in protecting residents against all kinds of fraudulent schemes that such unscrupulous opportunists invent to speed up work and violate safety protocols.”

Commissioner Peters said, “This defendant was the architect of a plot to line his and his associates pockets by engaging in illegal gas meter installations for cash; ignoring safety and potentially endangering lives. Today’s guilty plea demonstrates that undermining City processes and violating necessary construction regulations are serious offenses that will be investigated and prosecuted. We thank the Brooklyn District Attorney’s Office for their partnership in this case.”

The District Attorney identified Weldon “Al” Findlay, 48, of Snyder Avenue, Brooklyn, as the mastermind and leader of the enterprise. Findlay, who worked for National Grid until 2010, pleaded guilty today to one count of enterprise corruption and one count of falsifying business records before Brooklyn Supreme Court Justice Danny Chun, who, in a plea offered by the Court, promised him a term of 2 1/3 to 7 years in state prison when he is sentenced on May 2, 2018.

The District Attorney said that, according to the guilty plea, the enterprise arranged for the illegal installation of gas meters in exchange for cash at 33 residential properties across Brooklyn, including Williamsburg, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Heights, Bushwick, Crown Heights, Midwood, and Borough Park, in addition to homes in parts of Queens. Findlay formed

the enterprise and directed its criminal activities throughout the period covered by the indictment, namely January 12, 2016 to June 30, 2016.

The Department of Buildings and National Grid have inspected every property identified in connection with the investigation, and ensured that there is no risk to public safety.

The District Attorney said that existing protocols required National Grid employees opening accounts (for new or renewed gas service) to check the public Building Information System (BIS) database to confirm that the property had been inspected as required by the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB). A licensed master plumber or a DOB inspector must visit the location and conduct appropriate testing to ensure that gas lines have been properly and safely installed; compliance is indicated by a control number created in the BIS database. A National Grid employee acting properly would check for the BIS number and then include it in the account record before dispatching a technician to install a meter and initiate gas service.

According to the investigation, when a landlord with a new or renovated apartment wanted to avoid either the expense of the required tests, or possible delays associated with compliance, the landlord contacted Findlay, who would arrange for illegal service through his criminal enterprise. Landlords could be confident that National Grid employees setting up the account and providing gas service would violate or ignore any rules or regulations that would prevent or delay the supply of gas.

The case was investigated by DOI, specifically, Assistant Inspectors General Michael Antolini and Noah Mohny; Confidential Investigator Dan Taylor, Deputy Inspector General Edward Zinser and Chief Investigator James McElligott, under the supervision of Inspector General Gregory Cho, Associate Commissioner James J. Flaherty and First Deputy Commissioner Lesley Brovner.

The District Attorney thanked New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Mark G. Peters and his staff for their work on this case. He also thanked the New York City Department of Buildings and National Grid for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Adam S. Libove of the District Attorney's Public Integrity Unit, with the assistance of Senior Assistant District Attorney Sara Walshe, Assistant District Attorney Renee Hassel and Assistant District Attorney Katherine Zdrojeski, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Michael Spanakos, Unit Chief, and the overall supervision of Assistant District Attorney Patricia McNeill, Deputy Chief of the District Attorney's Investigations Division and Mark Feldman, Senior Executive Assistant District Attorney for Crime Strategies and Investigations.