



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

CHRISTOPHER RYAN
ACTING COMMISSIONER

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

Release #07-2026
nyc.gov/doi

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2026**

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

**JOINT DOI-DOB INVESTIGATIVE UNIT ISSUES VIOLATIONS TO UNLICENSED HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. MAN
WHOSE COMPANY ILLEGALLY HUNG STOREFRONT SIGN IN QUEENS
THAT WAS PART OF A COLLAPSE THAT INJURED THREE PEOPLE**

Christopher Ryan, Acting Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), in partnership with Ahmed Tigani, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Buildings (“DOB”), announced that four Construction Code violations have been issued to the owner of a Hempstead, N.Y. sign company, and his business, for conducting unlicensed and unpermitted sign work at a storefront in Bellerose, Queens. The sign, along with a façade wall and awning collapsed at 245-13 Jericho Turnpike on July 23, 2025, injuring one adult and two children. The investigation was conducted by the Buildings Special Investigations Unit (“BSIU”), a joint DOI-DOB unit that is managed by DOI and staffed by DOB employees.

Acting DOI Commissioner Christopher Ryan said, “These violations demonstrate the strength of the collaborative investigative unit that joins DOB’s technical expertise and DOI’s investigative skills. The Construction Code supports safety and as these violations show failing to follow it can have serious results. I thank DOB for its partnership on this case and for its more than 20-year collaboration with DOI on BSIU.”

Buildings Commissioner Ahmed Tigani said, “We use permits and approvals as a critical bulwark, protecting communities from unlicensed work and the real danger unchecked construction and structural maintenance can pose. As evidenced by this major collapse, the danger posed by poorly designed and poorly executed construction is not theoretical. It is immediate, tangible, and capable of creating life-threatening hazards for New Yorkers. We would like to thank the Department of Investigation for the important long-running partnership between our two agencies. This joint announcement today serves as an important warning to bad actors who incorrectly think they can stay under the radar and get away with performing shoddy work in our City.”

The investigation found that the sign had been installed less than two weeks prior to the collapse by Rico Creative Art LLC Signs and Murals in Hempstead, N.Y., which records show is owned by Enrico Barthol, also of Hempstead, N.Y. Barthol does not hold the required license to be a sign hanger in New York City. Invoice records show that Rico Creative Art LLC had been hired to create a 48-by-four-foot metal-and-canvas sign with LED lighting for \$14,000; however, did not hold a DOB license to hang signs, did not obtain the required permits to hang the sign, and did not submit the required plans to DOB for review.

As a result of the investigation, Barthol was issued one Construction Code violation, specifically, unlicensed sign hanging.

Barthol’s business was issued three Construction Code violations:

more

- Engaging in the sign hanging business without first obtaining a license from the commissioner of DOB.
- Work without a permit, aggravated due to the unpermitted work that caused injuries.
- Unlawful acts for failing to comply with a commissioner's order.

If found guilty of these violations, Barthol and his business face up to \$87,500 in penalties as a result of the violations.

BSIU was established in 2004 as a partnership between DOB and DOI. The unit is housed at and managed by DOI and staffed by DOB employees. It conducts investigations of DOB-licensed individuals, and others working in the construction industry, which can result in administrative violations, professional discipline, and/or criminal charges.

This investigation was conducted by BSIU Chief Investigator Jacques Fischer under the supervision of DOI's Office of the Inspector General for DOB, specifically First Deputy Inspector General Kim Ryan and Inspector General Michael Morris, and DOB Assistant Commissioner for Investigations and Compliance Reynaldo Cabrera.

These Construction Code violations are allegations and subjects of the allegations have the right to contest the violations and present evidence in their defense at a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge with the City Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings, who would determine whether the charges should be sustained.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country and New York City's corruption watchdog. 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 strategy attacks corruption comprehensively through systemic investigations that lead to high-impact arrests, preventive internal controls and operational reforms that improve the way the City runs.

DOI's press releases can also be found at twitter.com/NYC_DOI
Know something rotten in City government? Help DOI Get the Worms Out of the Big Apple.
Call: 212-3-NYC-DOI or email: Corruption@DOI.nyc.gov