



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

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

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CONTACT: DIANE STRUZZI
(212) 825-5931

**DOI ARRESTS MAN IN SCHEME TO SIPHON CASH FROM MANHATTAN BUSINESSES
BY USING FORGED HEALTH DEPARTMENT LETTER AND PERFORMING BOGUS INSPECTIONS**

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced the arrest of HECTOR COLLET on charges that he duped small business operators into paying him cash for purported "pre-inspections" supposedly under a contract with the City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene ("DOHMH"). In fact, DOHMH has no such contracts, and the documents COLLET presented were forged, according to the charges. The office of New York County District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance Jr. is prosecuting the case.

DOI began its investigation after it was notified by the DOHMH and the New York State Department of Agriculture about an individual reportedly posing as a DOHMH contractor supposedly assisting businesses in inspection preparation. The investigation into this matter is ongoing.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "These charges describe an audacious criminal scheme that sought to capitalize on business owners' desire to adhere to the City's Health regulations. But DOI worked with the Health Department and the Manhattan District Attorney's Office to track down the facts, expose the falsehoods and stop the charged scam."

COLLET, 41, of the Bronx, has been charged with Identity Theft in the First Degree and six counts each of Forgery in the Second Degree and Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, all class D felonies; and one count of Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree, a class E felony. Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison and a class E felony is punishable by up to four years in prison.

According to the criminal complaint, between July and November 2009, COLLET went to three businesses in Manhattan – a deli and two nail salons -- and misrepresented himself as an individual from AHRC that he said was subcontracted by DOHMH to conduct "pre-inspections" at various businesses. COLLET presented an AHRC identification card and presented a letter purporting to be from DOHMH indicating that AHRC was a subcontractor of DOHMH. COLLET charged the businesses between \$60 and \$75 for the pre-inspections and gave them receipts. DOI's investigation found that an AHRC employee whose name was on the identification card presented by COLLET had lost his identification card sometime around March 2009. The investigation also found that the purported DOHMH letter presented by COLLET was a fake; that the letter's seal was distorted and that DOHMH does not subcontract with anyone to conduct pre-inspections of businesses. AHRC is an organization that provides services under contract with DOHMH to individuals with developmental disabilities and has nothing to do with inspections.

According to the criminal complaint, DOI's investigation also determined that COLLET found the lost AHRC identification card on the street and replaced the photo on the card with his own; that COLLET

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created the purported letter and receipts he presented to business operators on a computer; that COLLET researched Health regulations on the computer; that he would point out supposed issues to business operators and then offer to arrange for extensions on supposed upcoming inspections, for a fee; and that he was paid between \$40 and \$160 by each business and conducted this scam in all five boroughs of the City.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn thanked New York County District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance; DOHMH Commissioner Dr. Thomas A. Farley; New York State Department of Agriculture Commissioner Patrick Hooker; and AHRC Executive Director Michael Goldfarbe and their staffs for their assistance in this investigation.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for DOHMH, including Inspector General Christopher Staackmann, Deputy Inspector General Stephan Zander and Special Investigator Danielle Caruso.

Assigned to the prosecution of the case is Assistant District Attorney Om Gillett, under the supervision of Tom Wornom, Chief of the New York County District Attorney's Special Prosecution Bureau.

A criminal complaint is an accusation. A defendant is 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.

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