



Department of Investigation

Press Release

Release #041-2000

2 Bronx Building Supers Arrested In Boiler Maintenance Scam ***– Forged FDNY Certificated To Operate Oil Burners***

TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 2000 -- EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), and THOMAS VON ESSEN, Fire Commissioner, today announced the felony arrest of two apartment building superintendents, MODESTO CABRERA and JOSE LAUREIANO, for falsifying New York City Fire Department (FDNY) certificates of fitness to operate oil burners in their Bronx buildings.

According to Commissioners Kuriansky and Von Essen, Fire Department regulations require building personnel, who operate oil burners in commercial and residential buildings, to pass a 2-hour qualifying examination given by the FDNY Public Certification Unit (PCU) at fire headquarters in downtown Brooklyn, and, thereafter, to undergo recertification every 3 years. The PCU annually issues about 1,300 fitness certificates to operate boilers. CABRERA and LAUREIANO needed the certificates to permit them to operate oil burners in the 8-story Bronx apartment buildings, at 2474 Valentine Ave. and 2185 Valentine Ave. respectively, in which they resided and provided building services.

Commissioner Kuriansky said, "The use of these bogus certificates potentially placed the lives of hundreds of tenants in danger. Fortunately, in this case, an alert realty firm employee noticed that the submitted documents looked phony, and promptly notified fire officials. We commend her for her vigilance and admirable concern for tenant safety."

Commissioner Von Essen said, "Once again the fine investigative work done by the New York City Fire Department Fire Marshals and the Department of Investigation has paid off. I am confident that these arrests will send a strong message that the City of New York will not tolerate those people who would otherwise needlessly and recklessly put the lives of its citizens in jeopardy."

Commissioners Kuriansky and Von Essen said that the investigation began in February when fire marshals were notified by an employee of Prime Realty, the building superintendents' employer, that the certificates filed by CABRERA and LAUREIANO appeared to have been altered.

The investigation disclosed that CABRERA and LAUREIANO had photocopied another building superintendent's certificate, altered the information to make it appear each of them had been properly tested and certified, and then submitted the altered documents -- CABRERA on November 6, 1999, and LAUREIANO on February 8, 2000 -- to Prime Realty as proof that they were officially qualified to operate the oil burner in their respective buildings.

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CABRERA, 30, of 2474 Valentine Ave., and LAUREIANO, 40, of 2185 Valentine Ave., both in the Bronx, were each charged with Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, a Class D felony, and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a Class E felony. If convicted, each defendant faces up to 7 years in prison.

The investigation was conducted by Elyse N. Post, DOI's Acting Inspector General for the Fire Department, and members of her staff, including Confidential Investigator Jayme Naberezny, DOI Investigative Squad Detectives James Tampellini and Eddie Lebron, and Fire Marshals Robert Greene, Mel Hazel, and Frank Quiles.

The Office of Bronx District Attorney Robert T. Johnson is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Taa Grays is handling the matter.