



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation

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**DOI ARRESTS MAN FOR POSSESSING FAKE FDNY CERTIFICATES OF FITNESS**

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), announced today the arrest of MARK PANICOLA for allegedly possessing several fraudulent New York City Fire Department licenses, called Certificates of Fitness, which are issued by the FDNY to anyone whose employer needs them to operate various types of equipment such as boilers, sprinklers, and air conditioning systems. In order to obtain a Certificate of Fitness, the applicant must take an exam given by the FDNY.

DOI's investigation began when an anonymous complainant reported that the defendant was using fake Certificates of Fitness. DOI investigators determined that PANICOLA was already known to the FDNY. Back in April 2006, he had been barred from receiving any Certificates of Fitness for one year because he had been caught cheating on an exam for a Certificate to operate pressure boilers. Investigators also determined that in approximately October 2006, PANICOLA was in the process of becoming a maintenance/custodial worker at the Claremont Preparatory School in Manhattan. He allegedly purchased fake Certificates of Fitness pertaining to, among other things, supervision of Claremont's low pressure oil burner, which he caused to be posted at Claremont in November 2006. The investigation is continuing into other fraudulent Certificates of Fitness PANICOLA may have possessed. Such Certificates of Fitness are issued by the FDNY because this type of equipment can be potentially hazardous.

PANICOLA has also been employed as a Watch Engineer at the Guggenheim Museum for approximately the past year, but it has been determined that he submitted legitimate Certificates of Fitness to the Guggenheim.

PANICOLA, 39, of Brooklyn, a maintenance worker, will be charged with Possession of a Fraudulent Instrument in the Second Degree. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "The Fire Department requires workers to pass exams for these Certificates because public safety is an issue with this type of equipment. This defendant, by failing to be properly licensed and by providing Claremont with fake Certificates, could have jeopardized the safety of children, teachers and their parents. I thank the anonymous tipster for reporting this misconduct to DOI."

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn thanked FDNY Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta and his staff for their assistance and cooperation in this case. This investigation was conducted jointly by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for FDNY and the FDNY Bureau of Fire Inspections. The Office of Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau is prosecuting.

Criminal complaints are accusations. Defendants are 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.*

***Get the worms out of the Big Apple.  
To report someone ripping off the City, call DOI at (212) 825-5959.***