



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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DOI ARRESTS TWO BUSINESS OWNERS AND A CONTRACTOR ON BRIBERY CHARGES
DOB inspectors reported the bribe offers and cooperated in investigations

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced the arrests of three businessmen, including a construction contractor, in separate cases, on charges of offering and paying bribes to inspectors with the City Department of Buildings ("DOB") in Brooklyn and Queens. In all three cases, DOB inspectors told DOI that they had been offered bribes to overlook or remove violations and cooperated with DOI investigators by accepting the charged payments from the defendants as investigators monitored the meetings.

The illegal payments, which ranged between \$180 and \$500, were made to induce the DOB inspectors to overlook violations they discovered during inspections of commercial and residential properties in Brooklyn and Queens, according to the criminal complaints. The investigations are ongoing.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "These arrests send a potent message to contractors and business operators that paying-off City inspectors is not the way to address violations. Bribery is a crime that will result in arrest, prosecution, and possible prison time. Buildings inspectors are required to tell DOI about all bribe offers, because payoffs undermine the City's efforts to monitor construction safety. I commend these inspectors who alerted and worked with DOI to stop corruption in its tracks."

DOB Commissioner Robert D. LiMandri said, "Inspectors play a critical role in protecting the public, and I commend these inspectors for their integrity in reporting these alleged acts of bribery and taking a stand against those who want to circumvent the law. I would like to thank Commissioner Gill Hearn and her staff for bringing these people to justice."

The following is a synopsis of each of the incidents, based on the criminal complaints:

QUEENS ARREST

- LUTCHMAN SOOKDEO, 25, of Queens, was arrested today in connection with an October 9, 2008 incident in which a DOB inspector observed construction work being performed at 114-08 Sutter Ave. in Ozone Park without a permit. When the inspector issued a violation and stop work order, SOOKDEO, a private contractor, told the inspector that he could not have the job stopped and paid \$500 to the inspector in exchange for the inspector's telling SOOKDEO that he could remove the stop work sticker from a window. SOOKDEO has been charged with Bribery in the

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Third Degree, a class D felony. Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison.

The Office of Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown is prosecuting the case, which is assigned to Assistant District Attorney Michelle Cort.

BROOKLYN ARRESTS

- LEONARD DONDE, 38, of Brooklyn, was arrested on January 13, 2009 in connection with two incidents. On August 4, 2008, DONDE paid \$200 to a DOB inspector in exchange for the inspector's not issuing a building code violation at DONDE'S business, Modern Optical Incorporated, located at 453 Kings Highway in Brooklyn. On October 10, 2008, DONDE made a second payment of \$150, this time to a DOI undercover investigator, in order to remove a previous violation. DONDE has been charged with two counts of Bribery in the Third Degree, a class D felony, and Rewarding Official Misconduct in the Second 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 by up to four years in prison.
- AVI SHAI KADOSH, 32, of Brooklyn, was arrested on January 13, 2009 in connection with an October 30, 2008 incident. According to the criminal complaint, KADOSH paid \$180 to a DOB inspector in exchange for the inspector's closing out a previously-filed complaint for doing construction work without a permit at KADOSH'S business at 404 Avenue M in Brooklyn. KADOSH was charged with Bribery in the Third degree.

The Office of the Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes is prosecuting both cases, which have been assigned to Assistant District Attorney John Rudikoff.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked DOB Commissioner Robert LiMandri, Brooklyn District Attorney Charles J. Hynes and Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown, and their staffs, for their assistance in these investigations.

The investigations were conducted by DOI's Inspector General for DOB Michael Carroll and members of his staff.

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.

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To report someone ripping off the City, call DOI at (212) 825-5959.**