



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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FIREFIGHTER ARRESTED FOR FALSE 911 CALL

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), and NICHOLAS SCOPPETTA, Commissioner of the New York City Fire Department ("FDNY"), announced today the arrest of NICHOLAS E. VRETTOS, a FDNY firefighter, on a charge of reporting a false emergency to 911 on December 4, 2008. The call was placed shortly after Commissioner Scoppetta announced partial night closings of fire units at four firehouses, including Ladder Co. 53 on Schofield Street, City Island, Bronx, where VRETTOS works.

The investigation revealed that additional false alarms were made within a short period on that date. The investigation is ongoing and may lead to additional arrests and charges.

The case against VRETTOS has been referred to the office of Bronx District Attorney Robert T. Johnson, which is prosecuting the matter.

DOI began its investigation after it was notified by the FDNY that a firefighter was implicated in the false alarms.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "Calling in a false alarm to 911 is not the way to protest a budget cut that prompted a partial closure. It triggers the FDNY to mobilize vehicles and personnel to a location based on a fictitious emergency. It is inherently dangerous when emergency vehicles go on a run to an emergency, and a fake emergency diverts those vehicles and makes them unavailable to people who need actual assistance. It defies belief that anyone, much less a firefighter, would report a nonexistent emergency at a school as alleged in this case. The timing of the calls suggests a deliberate attempt to tax the Fire Department's ability to respond. Now caught by this investigation, those responsible are facing swift and firm justice."

FDNY Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta said, "Malicious false alarms can delay firefighters' response to real emergencies, putting real victims at risk of more serious injury or even death. It is especially unforgivable when a member of our own department engages in this criminal activity. Anyone who shows such blatant disregard for our firefighters' time and the safety of the public should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

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VRETTOS, 30, of City Island, is charged with Falsely Reporting an Incident in the First Degree, a class D felony. Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison. VRETTOS has been employed by the FDNY since 2002 and his current annual earnings total approximately \$85,000.

According to the criminal complaint, VRETTOS called 911 at about 11:24 a.m. on Dec. 4, 2008, and falsely reported that there was a fire in the cafeteria of a school at 200 City Island Ave. in City Island. The school was in session at the time of the call. Ladder 53 in City Island responded to the call and did not find any remnants of a fire. The FDNY determined the call was a “malicious false alarm.”

The investigation found that the call was made from the location of the auto body shop that VRETTOS operates on City Island.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked FDNY Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta, Chief Fire Marshal Robert Byrnes and the FDNY Bureau of Fire Investigation for their assistance and cooperation in this investigation.

Assistant District Attorney Rosemarie Iaconis of the office of the Bronx District Attorney is assigned to the case.

This investigation was conducted by DOI’s Office of the Inspector General for FDNY.

A criminal complaint is merely 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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To report someone ripping off the City, call DOI at (212) 825-5959.**