



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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Release 16-2006
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2006

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MAN CONVICTED OF POSING AS CITY OFFICIAL

— Pretended to be a City Tax Collector and Water Inspector and took advantage of the elderly —

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI) announced that a jury in Brooklyn Supreme Court found SHAWN M. BROWN guilty yesterday of impersonating a City official, convincing four residents to admit him to their homes, stealing at least \$616 from three victims, and attempting to steal money from the fourth victim. BROWN told his victims that he was a City tax collector and a water inspector for the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

BROWN, 54, of Brooklyn, was arrested and charged in June 2005. The jury found him guilty Thursday, February 16, 2006 of Burglary in the Second and Third Degree, Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, Criminal Impersonation in the Second Degree and Scheme to Defraud in the Second Degree. His sentencing has been scheduled for March 14, 2006.

DOI investigators and NYPD detectives jointly investigated a number of complaints from people who said that a man who claimed to be a City official – in some cases a City Marshal, in others a DEP water inspector, and in other cases a building inspector – came into their buildings and apartments and pressured them into paying money for various fictitious debts, including taxes, water charges, building violations, and rent. Most of BROWN's victims were elderly and lived in Bedford Stuyvestant, Prospect Heights and East, N.Y., in Brooklyn. His victims testified at trial.

In one instance, BROWN entered a complainant's home and claimed to be a City tax collector and said that the victim owed back taxes, and that BROWN would "seal" the building that day unless the victim paid him \$246. BROWN displayed a Department of Correction inmate identification card to the victim. The victim paid BROWN \$246.

In another instance, BROWN told a victim that he was a DEP water inspector that the victim owed money for his water bill and that he would have to pay BROWN or would shut off his water. The victim paid BROWN \$180. BROWN used the same ploy on at least two other victims and collected \$190 from one of them.

Anyone who thinks they have been a victim of this or a similar scam should call DOI at (212) 825-5959 or call 311.

Members of the public should know that:

- No DEP employee is ever authorized to ask for cash money to perform any service or for payment of past due bills.
- Most water meters are read remotely from outside the home. DEP water use inspectors, however, may seek access without appointments for certain assignments, such as meter reading (if there is no remote or it does not work) and inspecting installations or repairs performed by DEP contractors.

- DEP water use inspectors wear uniforms and carry photo I.D. cards. Con Edison workers, who read water meters for DEP in all five boroughs, also wear uniforms and carry identification.
- Contractors installing water meters usually, but not always, make appointments in advance, wear uniforms, carry photo I.D. cards, and drive trucks bearing company identification.
- DEP air and noise inspectors and water quality investigators do not wear uniforms, but they must carry and present photo I.D. cards and DEP inspector badges. When doing tests in buildings and homes at the request of citizens, they normally make appointments in advance.
- DEP employees who respond to emergency situations, such as hazardous material spills or leaks in water and sewer systems may need to gain access to buildings or homes to determine the source of a leak. They do not wear uniforms, but must carry and present photo I.D. cards whenever requesting access to a residence or building.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Bureau of City Marshals, in particular, Special Investigators Caroline Tang-Alejandro and Esther Bluett, in cooperation with NYPD's Brooklyn Robbery Squad and with the assistance of the New York State Division of Parole. The Office of Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes prosecuted the case, which was tried by Assistant District Attorney Patrick Cappock.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd for DEP's assistance.

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.***