



The City of New York
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STATEMENT FROM DOI REGARDING THE INDICTMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WHO CREATED DANGEROUS CONDITIONS WHICH LED TO THE DEATHS OF TWO NEW YORK CITY FIREFIGHTERS IN THE BRONX

Today it was announced that three individuals and a corporate owner were indicted in Bronx Supreme Court for their roles in contributing to the deaths of two New York City Firefighters.

The defendants, Rafael Castillo, Caridad Coste, and Cesar Rios, along with 234 East 178th Street LLC, were each charged with Two Counts of Manslaughter in the Second Degree, Two Counts of Criminally Negligent Homicide, and Reckless Endangerment in the Second Degree, for creating and allowing dangerous conditions at 236 East 178th Street which resulted in the deaths of firefighters John Bellew and Curtis Meyran.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "The terrible incident which took place on January 23rd resulted in a truly devastating loss to the FDNY and the City of New York as a whole. Following the fire, this investigation was pursued with vigor. These arrests should serve as a warning to those whose greed would motivate them to illegally convert apartment buildings that their illegal actions have tremendous consequences both for the innocent victims whose lives may be lost and for themselves, that they will be arrested and face possible jail time. We are pleased with the indictments announced today by District Attorney Johnson and believe that justice will be served."

DOI began its participation in this investigation by canvassing all the neighbors where the fire occurred and in the surrounding buildings to identify possible leads. Once witnesses were identified, DOI's investigators set out to locate the witnesses who had been displaced due to the fire and conducted interviews to learn both who was responsible for the illegal conversions, as well as who was profiting from constructing these conversions. DOI also issued subpoenas to businesses within close proximity to the building where the fire occurred and analyzed documents to determine who may have purchased supplies that would be used in illegal conversions. The documents the DOI investigators obtained serve as documentary support for the prosecutors. Another role DOI played in this investigation was one of a technical liaison between prosecutors and the Department of Buildings. Investigators determined through analyzing building codes what legal and illegal structures existed within the building and used drawings to re-create what the building should have looked like if it was in compliance with DOB codes. Finally, DOI investigators assisted in the arrests of these defendants.

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.