



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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Release # 29-2005
nyc.gov/html/doi

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 2005

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DOI ANNOUNCES THREE GUILTY PLEAS IN A \$40,000 BRIBERY SCHEME
-- Two DEP employees involved --

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), announced today that JOHN BONDANZA, a Labor Law Coordinator with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, has pleaded guilty to crimes involving his receipt of two \$5,000 payments from Plumbing Solutions, which has three City contracts worth \$7.2 million to install water meters throughout the five boroughs. The City suspended these contracts in March 2004. Two other defendants connected to the \$40,000 scheme have already pleaded guilty.

BONDANZA, 37, of Queens, pleaded guilty on Tuesday April 5, 2005 in Queens Criminal Court before Judge Dorothy Chin-Brandt to a felony charge of Receiving Reward for Official Misconduct and Conspiracy charges. In January 2003 and August 2000, BONDANZA accepted two \$5,000 payments from JEFFREY RESPLER, the sole owner of Plumbing Solutions, Ltd. In return, BONDANZA assigned more work orders to Plumbing Solutions instead of giving those work orders to other companies also under contract with the City to install water meters. BONDANZA, who resigned from DEP yesterday, will be sentenced on May 19, 2005 and is expected to forfeit \$10,000, the proceeds of his criminal conduct, to New York State.

Last month, VINCENT TRIPODI, the former DEP Chief of Meter Inspections in Queens, pleaded guilty in Queens Criminal Court to Conspiracy in the Fourth Degree, an E Felony. TRIPODI, 47, of Brooklyn, admitted that from November 2000 to August 2003 he accepted \$30,000 from RESPLER to expedite inspections of water meters installed by RESPLER's company. The expedited inspections meant that payments for services RESPLER's company had rendered also would be expedited. TRIPODI will pay \$30,000 in restitution to New York State. He will be sentenced on April 13. He resigned from DEP in December 2004.

In another layer of the scheme, JOHN VALENZA, 43, of Massapequa, was arrested March 3, 2005 and charged in Queens Criminal Court with Conspiracy in the Fifth Degree, an A Misdemeanor, for accepting \$300 a week from RESPLER in exchange for allowing Plumbing Solutions to falsely claim that VALENZA was the company's legitimately licensed Master Plumber. The Criminal complaint alleges, in order to operate legally in New York City, Plumbing Solutions needed to have a licensed Master Plumber. VALENZA was not a majority owner of Plumbing Solutions and exercised little or no supervision of the company's work. His next Court date is April 25, 2005.

JEFFREY RESPLER, 43, of Queens was sentenced in November 2004 in Queens Criminal Court, pursuant to the terms of a plea agreement, which among other provisions required him to pay restitution and forfeiture that includes funding a \$300,000 trust to pay workers' wage claims; paying restitution of \$360,000 to the Plumbers Union Local 1 Trade Education Fund; and to forfeit \$75,000 to the State of New York. He pleaded guilty in July 2004 to four counts of Conspiracy in the Fifth Degree, an A Misdemeanor, and admitted that he paid bribes to BONDANZA and TRIPODI; that he paid VALENZA money in order to use VALENZA's license in false documents RESPLER filed with DEP and the Mayor's Office of Contracts; and that he filed wage statements with New York City that falsely indicated he was paying his workers the appropriate wages for the hours they worked. An additional Conspiracy account related to a fraudulent real estate transaction between RESPLER and the plumber's union.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "The two DEP employees involved in this case used their inside knowledge and access to take advantage of their position and, in doing so, they betrayed the public's trust that government is run honestly and well. This case should serve as a warning to others who would consider engaging in similar criminal conduct that DOI will expose the scheme and there will be penalties to pay. DOI will make every effort to collect restitution and forfeiture on behalf of the City, which was victimized by the criminal conduct outlined in this case."

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer and members of his staff, as well as John McGlynn, Regional Inspector General for the United States Department of Labor, Office of Labor Racketeering, for handling this matter. Commissioner Gill Hearn also thanked DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd and members of her staff, including Deputy Commissioner Denise Richardson, for their assistance and cooperation

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Inspector General for DEP John Kantor and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspector General Chris Staackmann and Special Investigator Michael Santos. These prosecutions were supervised by J. Christopher Prather, Deputy Attorney General in charge of the New York State Attorney General's Organized Crime Task Force, and were handled by Assistant Deputy Attorney General Dennis Walsh.

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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