



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

ROSE GILL HEARN
COMMISSIONER

80 MAIDEN LANE
NEW YORK, NY 10038
212-825-5900

Release #47-2008
nyc.gov/html/doi

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11, 2008

CONTACT: DIANE STRUZZI
(212) 825-5931

**STATEMENT BY DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATION COMMISSIONER ROSE GILL HEARN ON THE
MANSLAUGHTER INDICTMENT OF WILLIAM LATTARULO IN FATAL WALL COLLAPSE IN BROOKLYN**

On March 12th, DOI investigators responded immediately to Glenmore Ave. in Brooklyn, where Lauro Ortega lost his life buried under dirt and rubble during an excavation job. DOI responds to all construction accidents where there are fatalities anywhere in the 5 boroughs because possible violations of the Building Code may be the cause of such tragedies. Several other investigations of this type are underway by DOI in several boroughs, so this charge shows that we have traction with respect to these sorts of offenses, and New Yorkers who have become distressed after witnessing a series of construction fatalities can be assured that DOI investigators working with our City's prosecutors are resolved to get to the bottom of how these events occurred and hold people accountable.

DOI's investigation of that ill-fated job by William Lattarulo revealed a step-by-step guide on how not to dig a foundation. As the indictment brought by DA Hynes charges, Lattarulo only paid lip service to the lawful procedure for this kind of construction job, while knowingly disregarding every rule in the book. These actions led to an all-too-predictable outcome: a cave-in at the Glenmore Avenue site, the collapse of a wall not properly supported, and the tragic death of one worker.

DOI investigators interviewed numerous witnesses and reviewed records to reconstruct these events, and with the assistance of an experienced forensic DOB engineer, compared what was done with what should have been done. While, sadly, this case will not undo the harm that has been done, it will demonstrate that an individual who would risk others' lives and safety for his own ends is also risking arrest, criminal prosecution and, if convicted, prison.

The investigation that led to today's indictment is continuing and further developments are expected. It is one of nine fatal construction incidents that DOI is examining. People can be assured that, with our law enforcement and agency partners, DOI will pursue the facts in all of these types of cases.

Indictments 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.

Get the worms out of the Big Apple. To report someone ripping off the City, call DOI at (212) 825-5959.