



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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Release #47-2007
nyc.gov/html/doi

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, JUNE 19, 2007

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DOI ARRESTS PROPERTY OWNER FOR ALLEGEDLY OFFERING \$1,000 TO A BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT INSPECTOR TO OVERLOOK UNSAFE EXCAVATION WORK AT A CONSTRUCTION SITE IN BROOKLYN
--DOB inspector alerted DOI about the alleged bribe offer--

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), announced today the culmination of an investigation that resulted in the arrest of VAUGUENS MICHEL in connection with allegedly offering \$1,000 to a Department of Buildings (DOB) Inspector to ignore unsafe excavation work at the construction site of a new residential building at 504 Maple St. in Brooklyn, a property owned by MICHEL.

MICHEL, 49, of Brooklyn, was arrested on Bribery in the Third Degree, a class D felony, and Rewarding Official Misconduct in the Second Degree, a class E felony. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "Today's arrest comes at a time when the City is experiencing a surge in development that has unfortunately exposed greedy individuals who are willing to act unscrupulously and violate the law for profit. The allegations in this case should be a warning to those who think that bribing a City employee will allow them to defy safety regulations and building codes. On the contrary, that type of illegal behavior will lead to criminal charges and possible prison time. The building inspector who alerted DOI should be commended. This arrest underscores the vigilance of DOI and the Department of Buildings in attacking this kind of corruption."

DOI began its investigation on Monday, June 18, 2007, shortly after a DOB Construction Inspector reported to DOI that he was allegedly offered a bribe by MICHEL to overlook a violation at one of MICHEL's construction sites on Maple Street in Brooklyn. The DOB Inspector was conducting a follow-up inspection at 514 Maple St., a property owned by MICHEL, when he saw that excavation work for foundation footings at 504 Maple St. was being done without providing protection of the side walls. The City Building Code requires that the sides of excavation walls five feet or greater in depth have shoring and bracing to prevent the walls from collapsing. The excavation walls at 504 Maple St. were between 12 and 14 feet deep.

A DOI investigation found that MICHEL allegedly offered the Inspector \$500 to ignore the unsafe work condition. The DOB Inspector declined the offer. MICHEL then offered the Inspector \$1,000 to ignore the unsafe condition and not to issue an order that would have ceased work at the construction site. The Inspector informed MICHEL that the condition of the site needed to be made safe by shoring the walls and that he would be back on Tuesday, June 19. The Inspector immediately reported to DOI that he was offered money to overlook a building code violation.

Today, as part of a DOI covert operation, the Inspector met with MICHEL who allegedly offered the Inspector \$1,000 to again ignore the unsafe excavation of the site. DOI arrested MICHEL soon afterward.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked Department of Buildings Commissioner Patricia Lancaster and her staff for their assistance in this investigation.

This case was investigated by DOI's Inspector General for the Department of Buildings John Woods and members of his staff, including First Deputy Inspector General Joseph Ferraro, Confidential Investigator Sadie Lopez and the DOI NYPD Squad.

The Office of Brooklyn District Attorney Charles J. Hynes is prosecuting the case.

Criminal complaints are merely an accusation. 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.***