



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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**DOI ARRESTS CITY FIRE PREVENTION INSPECTOR AND AN OWNER OF A PRIVATE BUSINESS
IN CONNECTION WITH SEPARATE INCIDENTS OF FRAUD THAT UNDERMINED PUBLIC SAFETY**

MARK G. PETERS, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), in partnership with KEN THOMPSON, Brooklyn District Attorney, announced the arrests today of a City Fire Prevention Inspector with the New York City Fire Department ("FDNY") and, separately, the owner of a private extinguisher servicing company, on an array of charges including falsely stating that they had inspected various fire suppression systems in the City. DOI conducted undercover operations and examined cell phone records, license plate reading data, and FDNY records as part of these investigations. The Fire Inspector is charged with falsifying his route sheets, indicating he inspected sprinkler and stand pipe suppression systems in two dozen sites in Manhattan and Queens when, in fact, in four instances he had not, and in others he actually spent much less time at the inspection than indicated. In a separate scheme, DOI arrested the owner of Fire Safety Corporation on charges he falsely indicated he inspected and serviced fire extinguishers and fire suppression systems, and defrauded 12 businesses in Brooklyn and Queens of approximately \$1,350. These investigations began after allegations were reported to DOI, including from FDNY.

DOI Commissioner Mark G. Peters said, "These arrests are part of DOI's ongoing investigation into fire inspections. All New Yorkers rely on Fire Department employees and those they license to keep them safe. When they falsify reports and forms, they put us all in danger, and we will arrest them."

Brooklyn District Attorney Ken Thompson said, "Faking fire prevention inspections or failing to inspect fire extinguishers not only compromises safety but can also jeopardize the lives of many people. We will now hold these two defendants accountable for allegedly engaging in such dangerous and unlawful conduct."

EDWARD A. WOYCHOWSKI, 47, of Flushing N.Y., has been charged with 24 counts of Tampering with Public Records in the First Degree, a class D felony; and 24 counts each of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree and Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree, class E felonies. Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison and a class E felony is punishable by up to four years in prison. WOYCHOWSKI has been employed with FDNY since March 2000 and receives an annual salary of approximately \$45,312.

According to the criminal complaint and DOI's investigation, WOYCHOWSKI completed a Field Activity Report on each date he indicated he conducted inspections, which included the location - and start and end time - of each inspection, and any violations issued, and submit the report to FDNY Headquarters

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at MetroTech Center in Brooklyn. On these reports, the defendant indicated he drove his personal car to the inspection sites. DOI reviewed the defendant's cell phone data, Field Activity Reports, and license plate reader data captured by various cameras in New York City that revealed the location of the defendant's car during various relevant times. The investigation found that on 18 dates the defendant was not at the address where he claimed to be conducting an inspection, during the time he claimed the inspection took place, according to the criminal complaint:

- 284 Mott St., Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address from 9 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. on September 4, 2014; however, license plate data showed the defendant's car was traveling from Manhattan to Brooklyn, over the Williamsburg Bridge at 10:52 a.m.
- 262 Fifth Ave., Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address from 9 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. on September 5, 2014, and records showed he issued violations for the location; however, license plate data showed the defendant's car was traveling from Manhattan to Brooklyn over the Williamsburg Bridge at 10:22 a.m.
- 461 West 43rd St., Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address from 10:30 to 11:20 a.m. on September 12, 2014; however, license plate data showed the defendant's car traveling from Manhattan to Queens over the Ed Koch Queensboro Bridge at 10:54 a.m.
- 523 West 112th St., Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address from 9 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. on September 19, 2014; however, license plate data showed the defendant's car was traveling to Queens on the RFK Triborough Bridge at 11:55 a.m.
- 70 East 77th St., Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on September 30, 2014; however, license plate data showed the defendant's car was traveling from Manhattan to Queens at 10:13 a.m.
- 217 West 19th St., Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address from 10:30 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. on October 3, 2014; however, license plate data showed that the defendant's car was traveling from Manhattan to Brooklyn on the Williamsburg Bridge at 10:35 a.m.
- 450 North End Ave., Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on November 5, 2014; however, license plate data showed the defendant's car was traveling from Manhattan to Brooklyn on the Williamsburg Bridge at 12:55 p.m. on that date. In addition, cell phone data showed the defendant's phone pinged towers in Queens from 1:39 p.m. to after 2:30 p.m.
- 47 University Place, Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address between 9 a.m. and 2:15 p.m. on November 6, 2014; however, license plate data showed the defendant's car was traveling from Manhattan to Queens on the Ed Koch Queensboro Bridge at 11:18 a.m. In addition, cell phone data showed the defendant's phone pinged towers in Manhattan at 9:11 a.m. and in Queens at 11:39 a.m.
- 944 Third Ave., Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address between 9 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. on November 18, 2014; however, license plate data showed the defendant's car was traveling from Manhattan to Queens on the Ed Koch Queensboro Bridge at 11:35 a.m. In addition, cell phone data showed the defendant's phone pinged towers in Queens at 11:59 a.m., and additional ones in Queens thereafter.
- 1131 Broadway, Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address between 9 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. on November 25, 2014; however, license plate data showed the defendant's car was traveling from Queens to Manhattan through the Queens Midtown

Tunnel at 11:29 a.m. on that date. FDNY records show the defendant also issued violations at this address on that date. In addition, cell phone data showed the defendant's phone pinged towers in multiple locations indicating he was not near the location of the inspection, specifically he pinged a tower in Brooklyn at 9:12 a.m., and two in Manhattan, north of the inspection site at 10:15 a.m. and 11:58 a.m. and in New Jersey at 12:27 and 4:30 p.m.

- 77 East 12th St., Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address between 12 noon and 12:45 p.m. on January 7, 2015; however, license plate data showed the defendant's car was traveling from Manhattan to Brooklyn over the Williamsburg Bridge at 11:43 a.m. In addition, cell phone data showed the defendant's phone pinged towers in Queens from 11:51 a.m. and thereafter.
- 90 Morningside Drive, Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address between 12:40 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. on January 13, 2015; however, license plate data showed the defendant's car was traveling from Manhattan to Brooklyn over the Williamsburg Bridge at 12:18 p.m. In addition, cell phone data showed the defendant's phone pinged towers in Queens thereafter.
- 290 East 36th St., Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address between 9 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. on January 14, 2015; however, license plate data showed the defendant's car was traveling from Manhattan to Queens on the Ed Koch Queensboro Bridge at 11:01 a.m. In addition, cell phone data showed the defendant's phone pinged towers in Queens at 12:05 p.m. and thereafter.
- 342 East 50th St., Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address between 11:30 a.m. and 12:05 p.m. on January 15, 2015; however, license plate data showed the defendant's car was traveling from Manhattan to Queens on the Ed Koch Queensboro Bridge at 10:46 a.m. FDNY records showed the defendant also issued a violation at this address on that date. In addition, cell phone data showed the defendant's phone pinged towers in Queens at 12:32 p.m. and thereafter.
- 123 East 64th St., Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address between 12:30 p.m. and 1:15 p.m. on January 21, 2015; however, license plate data showed the defendant's car was traveling from Manhattan to Brooklyn on the Williamsburg Bridge at 12:40 p.m. on that date. Additionally, the defendant's route sheet indicated he inspected 120 University Place from 2:20 to 3 p.m. that same day and issue a violation. However, his cell phone records showed his phone last pinged in Manhattan at 11:36 a.m. and pinged in Queens from 12:58 and thereafter.
- 211 East 17th St., Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address from 1:20 to 1:55 p.m. on February 24, 2015 and issued a violation at this location; however, cell phone data showed the defendant's cellphone was in Queens at 1:08 and thereafter. The defendant falsely indicated that between 3 and 3:30 p.m., on that same February date, the defendant was conducting an inspection at 46-81 Metropolitan Ave. in Queens and FDNY records showed he issued a violation at that property. Cell phone data showed the defendant's cell phone pinged a tower in Queens not covering that site. The investigation found the property was vacant at the time of the inspection.
- Four adjacent properties in Queens: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting inspections at 67-09, 67-11, 67-13 and 67-15 Austin St. in Queens from 9 to 11:50 a.m. on February 27, 2015; however, the superintendent at these properties indicated the defendant was at those sites between 9 and 9:30 a.m. and then left the premises. FDNY records showed that the defendant's magnetic swipe card was used at FDNY's Headquarters, 9 MetroTech Center, at 10:46 a.m. In addition, cell phone data showed the defendant's phone pinged a tower in Queens near the inspection site at 9:24 a.m. and then in Brooklyn at 10:37 a.m.

- 38 West 55th St., Manhattan: The defendant falsely indicated he was conducting an inspection at this address between 9 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. on March 17, 2015; however, license plate data showed the defendant's car was traveling to Queens on the RFK Triborough Bridge at 11:35 a.m. In addition, cell phone data showed the defendant's phone pinged towers in Queens at 12:39 p.m. and thereafter.

DOI has referred these addresses to the FDNY, which is re-inspecting each of these sites.

A second, and separate, investigation led to the arrest of ALEXANDRO RIOS, 39, of Freeport, N.Y., who was charged with Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree, Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, and Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree, class E felonies. Upon conviction, a class E felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison.

RIOS' license to inspect portable extinguishers expired in September 2015 and, as a result, FDNY will be suspending his license.

The City Fire Code requires certain businesses to maintain fire protection equipment and periodically inspect and maintain this equipment. FDNY requires the individuals who service this fire-related equipment to obtain certification and/or licensing, including individuals who service portable fire extinguishers, fire extinguishing systems, and commercial cooking exhaust systems. When these individuals perform inspections, FDNY requires tags and stickers be placed on the equipment to document that the inspection was conducted by a certified and/or licensed individual. FDNY inspectors then review the tags and stickers while performing audits and annual inspections. These tags and stickers are recognized by FDNY as official business documents.

According to the criminal complaint and DOI's investigation, RIOS and his company Fire Safety Corp., were certified by FDNY to service portable fire extinguishers until September 28, 2015, when the company's certification expired. The defendant was never certified to inspect and clean commercial range hoods or fire extinguishing systems and was never authorized to perform this work for any other company. RIOS' scheme included defrauding five businesses in Brooklyn and seven in Queens by charging for inspection, cleaning and maintenance services, even though he was not licensed to perform that work. The scheme was perpetrated by placing tags and stickers on fire safety equipment that falsely represented a licensed individual or company had inspected or maintained the equipment or falsely stated the defendant properly inspected and serviced the portable fire extinguishers. Specifically, RIOS is charged in connection with the following incidents, according to the criminal complaint:

- March 12, 2015, DOI investigators observed a man later identified as the defendant exiting a vehicle with the name "Fire Safety," and which is registered to the defendant, enter a deli at 2020 Nostrand Ave. in Brooklyn. Immediately following, DOI and FDNY investigators entered the business. A witness at the deli stated that Fire Safety had cleaned the range hood system the previous night, and serviced fire extinguishers that day, charging them \$200. A sticker on the range hood indicated a company unaffiliated with the defendant had completed the maintenance and FDNY records show that company was not licensed to perform such cleaning. In addition, the defendant does not have a license to inspect, clean or maintain range hoods. FDNY found that the fire extinguishers had not been properly serviced.
- March 12, 2015, DOI investigators observed a man later identified as the defendant enter a dentist office at 1208 Flatbush Ave. in Brooklyn. Immediately following, DOI and FDNY investigators entered the business and were informed that Fire Safety Corp. had serviced fire extinguishers at the business, charging the business \$176. FDNY found that two of three fire extinguishers had not received proper maintenance or other testing. This month, DOI investigators found that the same two extinguishers had not been serviced and had tags from Fire Safety Corp. on them that falsely indicated they were serviced.

- May 1, 2015, the defendant arrived at a Queens restaurant at 70-01 Beach Channel Dr. after a DOI investigator acting in an undercover capacity contacted the defendant to perform work to remedy a FDNY violation on a range hood. The defendant took two fire extinguishers to his vehicle, placed new tags on them indicating the extinguishers were in working order and had been properly inspected; placed a sticker from a company unaffiliated with the defendant on the range hood and indicated he would return but that the equipment was inspected. The defendant charged a DOI undercover investigator \$235 for those purported services. Immediately following, DOI and FDNY inspectors went into the restaurant and found that neither of the two fire extinguishers tagged by the defendant had received the required maintenance and the range hood and fire suppression system had not been properly cleaned and maintained.
- July 8, 2015, DOI investigators observed the defendant enter a deli at 2618 Fulton St. in Brooklyn, leave with a portable fire extinguisher, enter his vehicle and then return to the deli with it, spending approximately 10 minutes inside. DOI and FDNY investigators later found the defendant purportedly cleaned the range hood, charging \$86, and placed a sticker with the name of another company indicating the range hood had been cleaned. This month, deli employees informed DOI that an individual from Fire Safety Corp. came to the deli and placed another sticker with a company unaffiliated with the defendant on the range hood and also tagged the fire suppression system with a tag that represented a company unaffiliated with the defendant, and charged the deli \$175 for purportedly inspecting its fire extinguishing system.
- July 8, 2015, DOI investigators observed the defendant enter a laundromat at 2106 Fulton St. in Brooklyn. Immediately following, DOI and FDNY investigators arrived and found that the defendant indicated two fire extinguishers had been inspected when, in fact, neither had received the required testing. Both tags placed on the extinguishers falsely indicated they were inspected. The defendant charged the businesses a total of \$50 for those purported services.
- July 8, 2015, DOI investigators observed the defendant enter a deli at 690 Franklin Ave. in Brooklyn. DOI and FDNY investigators later found a sticker on the range hood from a company unaffiliated with the defendant indicating it had been cleaned according to City Fire Code regulations, and also a tag on a fire suppression system indicating it had been serviced by another company unaffiliated with the defendant and not licensed to service such equipment. Video surveillance showed the defendant placing a sticker on the range hood and a tag on the suppression system. For those purported services the business was charged \$50.
- October 19, 2015, DOI observed an associate with the defendant walk into five separate locations in Queens. DOI and FDNY investigators later checked and found tags on extinguishers falsely stating the extinguishers had received proper maintenance by a certified individual and that the extinguishers were in good working order. However, the fire extinguishers had not received the proper maintenance and testing and in one instance, at 22-58 31st St., one of the extinguishers was actually empty. The Queens locations associated with this conduct are: a grocery store at 42-15 Broadway, which paid \$25 for the purported services; a deli at 36-63 34th St., which paid \$35 for the purported services; a grocery store at 22-58 31st St., which paid \$25 for the purported services; a grocery store at 31-03 21st Ave., which paid \$15 for the purported services; a hair salon at 31-05 21st Ave., which paid \$20 for the purported services; and a deli at 40-13 20th Ave., which paid \$80 for the purported servicing of two fire extinguishers and cleaning of a range hood.

DOI has referred these addresses to the FDNY, which is re-inspecting each of these sites.

DOI Commissioner Peters thanked Brooklyn District Attorney Kenneth Thompson, FDNY Commissioner Daniel A. Nigro, and their staffs, for their assistance and cooperation in these investigations.

This investigation was conducted by DOI's office of the Inspector General for FDNY, specifically Special Investigator Michael Liaw for the WOYCHOWSKI investigation and Assistant Inspector General Erin Schultz for the RIOS investigation, both investigations with the assistance of DOI's NYPD Squad of

detectives, under the supervision of Inspector General Frank J. Carine, Associate Commissioner Paul Cronin, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Michael Carroll and First Deputy Lesley Brovner.

Assistant District Attorney Emily Bradford, Deputy Chief of the Brooklyn District Attorney's Public Integrity Bureau, is prosecuting the cases.

Criminal complaints are accusations. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country and New York City's corruption watchdog. 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. DOI's strategy attacks corruption comprehensively through systemic investigations that lead to high-impact arrests, preventive internal controls and operational reforms that improve the way the City runs.

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