



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

MARGARET GARNETT
COMMISSIONER

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

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nyc.gov/doi

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CONTACT: DIANE STRUZZI
(212) 825-5931

DOI INVESTIGATION LEADS TO ARREST OF STATEN ISLAND HOMEOWNER ON BRIBERY AND RELATED CHARGES

Margaret Garnett, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced today the arrest of a Staten Island homeowner on bribery and related charges for allegedly offering a bribe to a City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Asbestos Inspector in exchange for overlooking asbestos violations at the defendant's home. DOI began its investigation after DEP immediately reported the bribery allegations to DOI. The office of Richmond County District Attorney Michael E. McMahon is prosecuting the case.

ASTRIT BUCI, 39, of Staten Island, N.Y. is charged with two counts of Bribery in the Third Degree, a class D felony, and two counts of Criminal Solicitation in the Fourth Degree, a class A misdemeanor. Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison and a class A misdemeanor by up to a year's incarceration. BUCI was arraigned today in Richmond County Supreme Court and released on his own recognizance and is scheduled to return to court on December 8, 2021.

DOI Commissioner Margaret Garnett said, "This City has zero tolerance for anyone who tries to bribe a public servant to evade safety regulations, placing New Yorkers at risk. As this homeowner learned the hard way, there are many honest City employees who immediately report attempts to illegally influence them. I commend this DEP Asbestos Inspector for reporting this matter and stopping corruption in its tracks and I thank the Richmond County District Attorney's Office for their partnership on this matter."

Richmond County District Attorney Michael E McMahon said, "This defendant allegedly offered bribes with the expectation of having fraudulent asbestos reports filed, potentially threatening the health of all those who live and work near this property. Fortunately, DOI investigators uncovered his alleged scheme and my office's Public Corruption Unit was able to bring an indictment against this defendant. We thank our partners at DOI for their hard work assisting with this case, and we remain committed to working together to fight fraud in all its forms in order to make Staten Island a safer place."

According to the indictment and DOI's investigation, on September 11, 2021, a DEP Asbestos Inspector conducted an inspection of the defendant's home and identified multiple asbestos violations. The defendant told the Inspector he wanted to fix the problems and offered to tip him. The Asbestos Inspector immediately reported the incident to DOI, which then conducted an undercover investigation on September 20, 2021 with an undercover DOI investigator posing as a DEP Asbestos Inspector in a pre-arranged meeting with the defendant. During this meeting, BUCI handed the undercover investigator \$2,200 in cash in exchange for not issuing the defendant asbestos violations. The asbestos-related violations include improper abatement and failure to file proper paperwork with DEP, and failure to construct a decontamination unit, all of which are pending with DEP.

Commissioner Garnett thanked Richmond County District Attorney Michael E. McMahon, and his staff, for his prosecution of this matter. Commissioner Garnett also thanked City DEP Commissioner Vincent Sapienza and his staff for their immediate reporting of the incident and their cooperation during the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for DEP, specifically Confidential Investigator Alaina Infantino and Assistant Inspector General Noah Mohney, under the supervision of Inspector General Andrew Brunsten, Deputy Commissioner/ Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella, and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel Cort.

The case is being prosecuted by the office of Richmond County District Attorney, specifically Assistant District Attorney Jonathan Chananie, head of the Office's Public Corruption Unit.

An indictment is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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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