



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

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FORMER NEW YORK CITY EMPLOYEE CHARGED WITH
STEALING BANK ACCOUNT INFORMATION FROM
CITY'S DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS

LEV L. DASSIN, the Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, ROSE GILL HEARN, the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation, and JOSEPH M. DEMAREST, JR., the Assistant Director-in-Charge of the New York Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), announced that ZENA JOHNSON, a former Quality Control Coordinator at the New York City Department of Buildings, was charged with bank fraud and conspiracy to commit bank fraud for her role in a scheme to steal bank account information provided to the Department of Buildings by individuals submitting permit renewals and alteration repair applications. Some of stolen information was used by JOHNSON's co-conspirators to create and cash more than \$50,000 in counterfeit checks.

As alleged in the Complaint filed today in Manhattan federal court:

The New York City Department of Buildings ensures the safe and lawful use of over 950,000 buildings and properties by enforcing the City's Building Code, Electrical Code, Zoning Resolution, New York State Labor Law and New York State Multiple Dwelling Law. Department of Buildings functions include

examining building plans, issuing construction permits, inspecting properties, and licensing trades. The Department of Buildings also issues Certificates of Occupancy and Place of Assembly permits.

Until her resignation on May 26, 2009, JOHNSON had worked for several years as a Quality Control Manager at the Department of Buildings Manhattan office. JOHNSON, among other things, audited the work done by cashiers and clerks who processed checks submitted at the Department of Buildings' customer service window. JOHNSON was, in particular, responsible for processing incoming paperwork and checks related to permit renewals and alteration repair applications. On at least 50 to 70 occasions, JOHNSON made copies of such checks and provided them to co-conspirators who used the information on the checks to make and cash more than \$50,000 in counterfeit checks.

JOHNSON, 29, of Bronx, New York, is charged with one count of conspiracy to commit bank fraud and one count of bank fraud. If convicted, she faces a maximum sentence of 30 years in prison for each of the counts.

JOHNSON surrendered this morning to FBI authorities and is expected to be presented later today before United States Magistrate Judge DEBRA FREEMAN in Manhattan federal court.

Mr. DASSIN praised the investigative work of DOI and the FBI.

The case is being prosecuted by the Office's Public Corruption Unit. Assistant United States Attorney AMIE N. ELY is in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Complaint are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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