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BRONX LANDLORD INDICTED FOR FILING FALSE PERMIT REQUEST
Said Building Vacant, But Demolished Walls While Tenant,
8 Children Still Occupied An Apartment

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark today announced that a Bronx landlord has been indicted for first-degree Offering a False Instrument for Filing for allegedly lying on a construction permit request, leading to his partially demolishing a building while tenants occupied it, jeopardizing their safety.

District Attorney Clark said, “We will not tolerate anyone putting tenants in danger during building construction. This defendant allegedly said his building was vacant so he could get a permit, but he allegedly knew a family remained in their apartment, and he proceeded to demolish walls and ceilings, making the building unsafe. Fortunately, no one was injured.”

Department of Investigation Commissioner Nadia I. Shihata said, "As charged, this Bronx landlord allegedly falsely represented that the building he planned to renovate was unoccupied and would remain vacant during construction, despite knowing that there were tenants living in the building. That omission allowed the landlord to begin demolition without adequate protections for the tenants, making the building unsafe and resulting in a vacate order that forced the tenants – including children – out in the middle of the night in a building where the public hallways had no electricity. The City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) became aware of tenants living in the building, took administrative enforcement actions, and reported the occupancy and building conditions to DOI. I thank the Bronx District Attorney’s Office, the City Department of Buildings, and HPD for their continuing partnership to root out alleged falsifications that endanger tenants and safe construction in New York City."

District Attorney Clark said the defendant, Joel Grunbaum, 31, of Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn, was arraigned today on first-degree Offering a False Instrument for Filing before Bronx Supreme Court Justice Pamela Goldsmith. He is due back in court on August 31, 2026.



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According to the investigation, the defendant filed a permit request with the city's Department of Buildings stating he is the owner of 716 E. 215 Street, Bronx, and stating that his building was unoccupied and would remain unoccupied during construction, alteration, or demolition. He allegedly was aware that a tenant and her eight children/grandchildren lived in an apartment on the third floor. Based upon his false statements, the defendant was granted a permit to construct a building.

According to the investigation, he proceeded to demolish the walls and ceilings of the vacant apartments and common areas of the current building while the individuals were living in the building. Because he was not truthful in his application, the permit was issued without the requirement of a Tenant Protection Plan (TPP), which is required any time there is construction performed in an occupied building. The demolition of the interior rendered the building unsafe, and DOB issued a vacate order on November 6, 2022. The tenant and her family were forced to move out in the middle of the night, through areas without lighting.

The case is being prosecuted by Senior Investigative Counsel Deborah Seidenberg of the Construction Fraud Prosecution Initiative, Financial Frauds Bureau, under the supervision of Eugene Bykov, Supervisor of the Financial Frauds Bureau, Pia Freedman, Supervisor of the Financial Frauds Bureau, Michelle Milanes, Deputy Chief of the Financial Frauds Bureau, Herman Wun, Chief of the Financial Frauds Bureau, and under the overall supervision of Denise Kodjo, Deputy Chief of the Investigations Division and Wanda Perez-Maldonado, Chief of the Investigations Division.

District Attorney Clark thanked the NYC Department of Investigation, in particular Assistant Inspector General for DOB, Emily Casewell, and Inspector General for DOB, Michael Morris, for their invaluable assistance with this investigation.

An indictment is an accusatory instrument and not proof of a defendant's guilt.