



Saturday, October 22, 2005, 11PM

CBS 2 Investigates A Manhattan Landlord Residents Claim Their Landlord Is Engaging In Illegal Tactics To Get Them Out



Cheryl Fiandaca
Reporting



(CBS) NEW YORK Tenants say it is all an effort to drive them out and raise the rent to market value. Claiming their landlord is engaging in illegal tactics and is failing to provide them with basic services. Their complaints are so serious; they got the attention of the Manhattan District Attorney's office, which is now investigating the landlord and his companies.

The documents acquired by prosecutors bring heavy criminal charges against a city landlord. CBS-2 viewed exclusive videotape that shows detectives from the Manhattan District Attorney's office taking dozens of boxes of evidence out of the midtown offices of Sky Management, which is one of many real estate companies allegedly controlled and managed by Fred Ohebshalom or members of his family.



Records show, more than ninety buildings in New York City are owned or managed by the family. These three buildings in Manhattan have serious on going problems. With over 100 open HPD violations. Many tenants claim some of the family owned properties are in deplorable condition, and may be dangerous. Rosemarie Vilomar, is one of the worried tenants, "I've been battling cancer since 2001, mold can be a carcinogenic."

Rosemarie Vilomar, has lived in her Bronx apartment for nearly nine years, and has been trying to get the landlord to get rid of the mold on her bathroom ceiling and tiles, instead she says workers just cover it up with paint. Vilomar, along with several other tenants in the same building say the landlord has been harassing them, trying to force them out and has illegally raised their rents. Vilomar says, "we don't get hot water on a daily basis, we have to fight to get heat by calling 311, our elevators are always out of order, every other week, repairs are slow in coming."



And it isn't just getting repairs done that is a problem, Carlos Morales says, "They are constantly saying that you owe something that you don't owe. And they'll take you to court and say it was just a mistake. But here you are wasting a day in court, going through all the aggravation, I think we're getting harassed all the time."



No one from Sky Management or from the Ohebshalom family would talk on camera, but in a statement their attorney said, "Our client disputes the allegations made by a few disgruntled tenants and looks forward to the district attorney's office review of the building records. We are confident that their review will not reveal any notable discrepancies."

State Senator Liz Krueger has been working with the tenant group, and was the one who urged them to contact the district attorney's office with their allegations. Kruger said, "you are talking about hoodlums being sent into buildings to frighten tenants who are making complaints. This cannot be allowed to happen in the City of New York."



Vilomar and her fellow tenants now hope with the district attorney involved something will be done, saying, "I'm fed up with having to live this way."

It is not clear what if any charges will be brought in this case. The Manhattan District Attorney's office would not comment on the execution of the search warrants, or the status of the investigation.