



U.S. Department of Justice

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**For Immediate Release:  
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**Sep 2, 2009**

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**Event: Complaint**

**Defendant: Donald Patterson**

**CITY LEAD INSPECTOR CHARGED WITH  
ABUSING OFFICE**

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A City of Detroit lead inspector appeared before a United States Magistrate today on a complaint charging him with abusing his official position to commit wire fraud, after having been arrested last evening, United States Attorney Terrence Berg announced today.

Berg was joined in the announcement by Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy, Detroit Mayor Dave Bing, Public Information Officer James McCurtis, Jr., of the Michigan Department of Community Health, EPA Special Agent in Charge Randall Ashe, and FBI Special Agent in Charge Andrew Arena.

Named in the complaint was Donald Patterson, age 49, of Detroit.

The supporting affidavit alleges that Patterson works as a lead inspector for the city of Detroit. A young child was admitted to a Detroit hospital with a badly elevated blood lead level. Michigan law requires that the City of Detroit investigate for lead hazards the home in which

any child with an elevated blood lead level resides. The investigation into the home of this child was assigned to Patterson. Patterson identified a lead issue in this child's home. Rather than insist on proper lead removal, Patterson offered to the landlord that in exchange for \$200, wired to Patterson personally, he would "train" the grandfather of the child, who was living in the home, to take care of the lead problem. Patterson separately made the same offer to the child's grandfather, in exchange for \$200 cash paid directly to Patterson.

The complaint further alleges that as a Detroit employee, Patterson was not permitted to make these offers or to receive this money. Further, he was not qualified to provide the training. Proper training in lead removal requires a one week course. Rather than provide proper training in exchange for the \$400 he received, Patterson provided a 15 minute explanation on how to use paint stripper. In particular, Patterson did not inform the child's grandfather that it was important to keep the child out of the home during any lead abatement, and the child was, in fact, again exposed to lead in the home while the grandfather attempted to follow Patterson's instructions.

Patterson appeared in federal court this afternoon and was released on an unsecured bond. His preliminary examination is scheduled for 1 p.m. on September 21, 2009.

A conviction for wire fraud carries a maximum penalty of 5 years in prison or a \$500,000 fine, or both. Any sentence will ultimately be imposed under the United States Sentence Guidelines according to the nature of the offense and the criminal background, if any, of the defendant.

United States Attorney Berg stated, "The serious dangers associated with lead paint poisoning, particularly to young children, has been known for many years. That is why the strict and thorough enforcement of our health code is so crucial. Given the significance of today's charges, alleging that a lead inspector took payments to avoid doing his job of protecting the community, we will be very thorough in pursuing this matter to determine the full extent of the conduct and try to ensure that the public is protected."

FBI Special Agent in Charge Andrew G. Arena said, ““The health of a child was put at risk for \$400. Individuals in positions of public trust, who endanger the health of the American public for greed, will be will aggressively investigated by the FBI.”

James McCurtis, Jr., from the Michigan Department of Community Health stated, “Exposure to lead is a serious health risk, especially in children. Exposure can occur in older homes where lead-based paint remains, in dust from home remodeling projects or from contaminated soil and air. Lead accumulates in the body, and if left untreated, can cause brain, kidney and liver damage, anemia, mental retardation, behavioral problems and developmental delays.”

Wayne County Prosecutor Worthy stated, “Lead damages children's developing brains and nervous systems. The effects are not reversible. Lead poisoning in children has been shown to cause reduced IQ and learning disabilities as well as behavioral problems including attention deficit, hyperactivity and aggression. There is also growing evidence that links lead poisoning with an increased rate of juvenile delinquency. We take very seriously any allegations that a health inspector, charged with protecting children, should endanger them for his own personal gain.”

The City of Detroit, the Michigan Department of Community Health, the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Unit of the Wayne County Prosecutors Office, the EPA and the FBI have begun a joint and comprehensive review of the records of the Childhood Lead Poisoning and Prevention Control office of the Detroit Health & Wellness Promotion Department, to ensure that other reported incidents of elevated blood lead levels have been handled appropriately.

Citizens who are concerned that their home may be a lead hazard are encouraged to call the Detroit Department of Health & Wellness Promotion, Community Service Division, at 313.876.4303, or the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) at (866) 691-5323. Concerned citizens may also call CLEARCorps Detroit at 313.924.4000. CLEARCorps is a grass-roots organization that administers state lead programs and can provide resources to concerned parents.

In addition, the agencies encourage any citizen who has had a home inspected for lead by Donald Patterson, or who feel that they have been the victim of fraud in connection with lead removal, to call Principal Attorney Mary DuFour Morrow, of the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Unit of the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, at 313.224.5780.

A complaint is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. Trial cannot be held on felony charges in a complaint. When the investigation is completed a determination will be made whether to seek a felony indictment.

This case is being investigated by the EPA, FBI, and Wayne County Prosecuting Attorney, with assistance from the City of Detroit and the Michigan Department of Community Health.