

# Department of Justice

United States Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr.  
Western District of New York

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
DECEMBER 20, 2011  
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## **PROPERTY DEVELOPER CHARGED WITH EXPOSING EMPLOYEES TO ASBESTOS DURING REMOVAL OPERATIONS**

ROCHESTER, N.Y.— U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that Anastasios “Taso” Kolokouris, 28, of Avon, N.Y., has been arrested and charged by Criminal Complaint with violating the Clean Air Act asbestos work practice standards involving asbestos removal and disturbance. The charges carry a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Craig R. Gestring, who is handling the case, stated that the defendant is an owner of a warehouse located at 920 Exchange Street, Rochester. Acting on a complaint, an inspector from the New York State Department of Labor, Asbestos Control Bureau visited the property on December 13, 2011. According to the Complaint, the inspector observed people working in a large dumpster next to a loading dock. He observed large quantities of material that resembled asbestos in and around the dumpster and took some samples. A federal search warrant was obtained and federal and state agents entered the property on December 14. Additional samples were taken and over 90 bags of dry, friable asbestos were observed inside the warehouse. The samples were analyzed by a lab, and they all tested positive for asbestos.

The Complaint further alleges that Kolokouris hired several civilian workers without any asbestos training or experience to clean out the dumpster and load it into bags.

“Because asbestos is known to be a hazardous material, any business owner involved in the remediation or redevelopment of property which contains asbestos is obligated to follow certain guidelines,” said U.S. Attorney Hochul. “These guidelines are designed to protect the health and safety of employees, as well as residents living in nearby neighborhoods. Our Office is committed to prosecuting those who ignore or violate the environmental laws designed to protect the public.”

“This arrest is a great example of the cooperative enforcement relationship between the Environmental Protection Agency and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation,” said DEC Commissioner Joe Martens. “Improperly handled asbestos poses a health risk to all who come in contact with it, and can lead to chronic disease such as Asbestosis, and Mesothelioma. This case is particularly heinous because it exposed workers to asbestos without adequate protective equipment to save the defendant the cost of legal abatement and disposal.”

The Criminal Complaint is the culmination of an investigation on the part of Special Agents of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Criminal Investigation Division, under the direction of Special Agent-In-Charge William Lometti, Investigators of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Police, BECI, under the direction of Lieutenant Richard Thomas, the New York State Department of Labor, Asbestos Control Bureau, under the direction of Maureen Cox, and Officers from the City of Rochester, Office of Public Integrity, under Director George Markert.

The fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

**Any person who was, at some time, present in or around 920 Exchange Street, Rochester, New York during the time period August 1, 2011 to the present** may have been exposed to the asbestos therein. For more information, please call the NYS Health Department, refer to the website of the U.S. Attorney's Office, or call 1-800-799-6033.

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