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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Carting Business Owner Charged With Arson, Falsifying Records & Possessing Waste Containers Stolen from Competitors**

**\*\*\*Vincenzo Grasso, 42, of New Jersey, Named in 17-count Indictment, 2 Employees Also Face Criminal Charges\*\*\***

STATEN ISLAND, NY - Richmond County District Attorney Daniel M. Donovan, Jr., joined by Michael J. Mansfield, Commissioner of the New York City Business Integrity Commission ("BIC"), today announced that criminal charges have been brought against the owner of a Staten Island-based carting company for the arson one of his company's trucks, falsifying business records presented to the Business Integrity Commission and possessing 15 stolen metal waste containers. Charges have also been brought against two employees of the company.

District Attorney Donovan stated, "Law enforcement in this city has made major strides to eradicate criminal activity in the carting industry, we will not tolerate the actions of those who, either by theft, intimidation or violence, seek to limit fair competition and harm legitimate business owners and consumers."

BIC Commissioner Mansfield stated, "Today's indictments, which arose out of information obtained by the Business Integrity Commission leading to this joint investigation, exemplify the City's commitment to eliminate the influence of organized crime and corruption in the private carting industry. The Commission, a combined law enforcement and regulatory agency, has revoked Downtown Environmental Recycling's license to operate due to the serious nature of these charges. I want to thank the Richmond County District Attorney, Daniel Donovan for continuing to devote the necessary and substantial resources to successfully pursue these sensitive investigations and prosecutions."

An indictment unsealed today in State Supreme Court charges Vincenzo Grasso (DOB 6/10/1966) of Marlboro, NJ, Arson in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree, two counts each of Falsifying Business Records in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Degrees, two counts of Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the 4<sup>th</sup> Degree, five counts of Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the 5<sup>th</sup> Degree, two counts each of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Degrees, and one count of Conspiracy in the 1<sup>st</sup> Degree. The top count indictment, Arson in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree, a Class C felony, carries a penalty of up to 15 years in prison.

Vincenzo Grasso was arraigned this morning in State Supreme Court before Justice Leonard P. Rienzi. He was ordered held on \$5000.00 bail until his next court date on January 16, 2009.

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According to District Attorney Donovan, the defendant, who is the owner of Downtown Environmental Recycling of 118 Alaska Street, Staten Island, was initially investigated as part of an ongoing inquiry into stolen metal waste containers in Brooklyn. Those containers were later found in use by the defendant's company, having been repainted at his Staten Island headquarters. In an attempt to conceal this illegal activity, investigators determined that the defendant knowingly submitted false documents to BIC, which concealed the number of customers, employees, and trucks involved in his business. As a result of this investigation, the defendant is also charged with conspiring with a separately charged defendant, Michael Norton, an employee of the company, to intentionally damage a motor vehicle, a 1996 Freightliner dump truck, by setting it on fire on October 14, 2008 at the intersection of Bay and Prospect Streets. Michael Norton (DOB: 4/26/1955) of Brooklyn, was arrested on October 28, 2008 on a charge of Arson in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree. His case is currently pending.

As a result of this investigation, a search warrant was executed at the Fingerboard Road residence of Grasso's employee, Kenneth Sizian, on November 26, 2008. A total of 13 ounces of cocaine and \$50,000 were recovered from the residence. Sizian, whose employment was not disclosed by Vincenzo Grasso on required forms, is scheduled to be arraigned in State Supreme Court on December 10, 2008 on charges of Criminal Possession and Sale of a Controlled Substance in the 1<sup>st</sup> Degree, both Class A-1 felonies, carrying a top penalty of up to 20 years in prison. He is currently being held on \$500,000 bail.

The investigation was conducted by Detectives Angelo Barone and Detective Billy Martin of the Organized Crime Investigation Division, under supervision of Sergeant John Sondey and Lieutenant David Stein and the overall supervision of Inspector Brian O'Neill, working in direct conjunction with the Business Integrity Commission's Investigators Michael Quinn, Jesse Strauss and Lt. Christopher Mahon under the overall supervision of Ronald Cohen, Deputy Commissioner of Investigations and Enforcement for the Business Integrity Commission.

The case against Vincenzo Grasso is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Jeffrey Curiale, of the Investigations Bureau, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Mario F. Mattei, Bureau Chief. The defendant is represented by Todd Greenberg, Esq.

The public is reminded that an indictment is merely an accusation, and that a defendant is innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

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