

# The Ten Worst New York City Landlords of 2014

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As with everything else in this city, the field of awful landlords is a crowded one. Dirty, crumbling, roach-ridden apartments are a dime a dozen -- to stand out from the pack, a landlord must up his or her game to truly horrifying heights. Hostility comes in the form of actual, physical attacks; neglect looks like years without heat. Think your landlord's creepy? At least he didn't film you in the bathroom.

Among the perverts, bullies, and other shady characters who apparently control much of the city's real estate, these 10 landlords managed to distinguish themselves. Below, a list of the worst of the worst of the year:

**See also:** [How Can New York Stop the City's Worst Landlords?](#)

## 10. The Really Bad Liar

In August, the tenants of 149 First Avenue were informed by their landlord, 149 Associates LLC, that their rent-stabilized leases would not be renewed due to "deterioration issues." The building would have to be demolished, the letter read, and "as a matter of safety," they would all have to be out within 90 days. Funny thing, though: [According to the real estate website Curbed](#), at the time the note was sent, 149 Associates had only [one \(very minor\) recent violation](#), and exactly zero permits to demolish or renovate the building. In one of the few terrible-landlord stories with a happy ending, the tenants banded together and enlisted the help of housing advocates to fight back against the eviction. In

September, 149 Associates received its orders from the city: "Make safe immediately -- repair and maintain."

### **9. The Impostor**

Terrance Hill, as it turns out, isn't actually a landlord at all. The Queens resident [was arrested in August](#) and charged with grand larceny and burglary after using Craigslist to advertise and rent out properties he didn't actually own. According to NBC 4 New York, Hill allegedly collected more than \$5,000 from unsuspecting renters for empty homes on Long Island. His scheme was discovered only after the real owner of one of the houses returned to find a surprise in the form of two new tenants; Hill was arrested when he went to the home later that day to collect his rent payment.

### **8. The Repeat Offender**

Steve Croman, who owns multiple properties throughout Manhattan, seems to almost delight in playing the role of the villainous landlord. Over the years, tenants claim, he's initiated pointless lawsuits, ignored requests for repairs, and flat-out refused to renew leases, all in an effort to drive them out of their rent-stabilized units. If Croman had a mustache, he would have twirled it throughout -- but what he lacks in diabolical facial hair, he makes up for in henchmen. In July, the [Daily News reported](#) that New York attorney general Eric Schneiderman launched an investigation into Croman's tactics and slapped Croman employee Anthony Falconite, a former NYPD cop, with a cease-and-desist order [following claims that Falconite](#) had been sent to intimidate residents into moving.

### **7. The Tundra**

After years of living in the cold, the tenants of 305 Decatur Street, a Section 8 building in Bed-Stuy, finally received baseboard heating in August 2013 -- but this January, [DNAinfo reported](#) that residents were complaining that the long-awaited fix turned out not to be much of a fix at all, as the new system did little to alleviate the frigid temperature of their apartments. In the heating equivalent of putting a Band-Aid on a gaping wound, the building's management company, Shinda Management Corp., responded to complaints that the heat still wasn't working by dispatching the superintendent to put tape over cracks in the windows.

### **6. The M.I.A.**

At 690 Cleveland Street in East New York, residents have poured bottled water into their toilets to flush them and kept their gas stoves running, despite the risk of carbon-monoxide poisoning, to keep warm. [According to NY1](#), tenants said the building, owned by Raizel Weiser of J&A 1007 Trust, has neither running water nor heat; in March, a leak on the second floor flooded the first, leaving a hole in the ceiling that went unfixed. The Department of Housing Preservation and Development says J&A owes the city \$155,000 for repairs. In the meantime, some of the families unable to move out of the decrepit building have simply stopped paying their rent.



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## 5. The Wrecking Crew

Some landlords allow buildings to fall into disrepair in an attempt to force out their tenants; others, apparently with little time or patience for such subtleties, skip straight to more drastic measures. [In February, the Voice wrote](#) about tenants who say that landlords Aaron and Joel Israel are the latter: In February, a woman on Nassau Avenue in Greenpoint alleged the pair had used an ax to take out the building's water heaters, boiler, and electrical wiring. The next month, a woman reported that the Israels brought in a crew to demolish her apartment on Central Avenue in Bushwick, which she shares with her four children, without warning; tenants at a building on Bushwick's Linden Street said their units had been similarly gutted.

## 4. The Fighter

Landlord Malina Nealis has all the bases covered. Weeks without heat, gas, and hot water: check. Locks changed to deter inspectors: check. Rotting walls left neglected until they crumble away: check. Oh, and unprovoked physical assaults on tenants: check. Nealis was arrested in February after two of her attacks were [captured on video](#). In one, she's shown using a gate to jam a tenant's foot after he tries to enter the building through the basement; in the other, she leaps out of her car to hit the person holding the camera as he attempts to ask her a question. Shortly after her arrest, several of her tenants launched a rent strike in an effort to get the city to assume control of the building.

## 3. The Almost-Arsonist

Putting a horrifying new spin on the whole burn-it-for-the-insurance cliché, *DNAinfo* in November reported that Bed-Stuy landlord Lalbahadour Byjoo was indicted in November for planning to burn down his own building at 304-A Sumpter Street in order to get rid of two tenants living illegally inside. In January, Byjoo met with his arsonist-for-hire, explaining how to avoid being seen by surveillance cameras and handing over \$100 for gasoline, with the instructions that he "liked his steak well-done." Luckily for the people living in the building -- and unluckily for Byjoo -- the man was an undercover cop. Byjoo and his co-conspirator Jean St. Fleur, who have also been accused of using forged documents to seize other Brooklyn buildings, face up to 15 years in prison.

## 2. The Voyeur

On the other end of the spectrum from the absentee landlord is the one who has eyes everywhere -- including, in the case of tenant Aksana Kuzmitskaya, the bathroom and bedroom. In November, the

Daily News reported that Kuzmitskaya filed a lawsuit with the state Supreme Court claiming that landlords Eli Kadoch and Michel Kadoe installed cameras in her apartment at 7 West 82nd Street, where she lived rent-free as the building's maintenance person. Kuzmitskaya says she discovered the live feed after noticing a camera in her bathroom clock; when she dismantled it, she also found dozens of saved images of herself -- along with one of Kadoch in her apartment, tinkering with another camera.

### **1. The Leader of the Pack**

The company 3525 Decatur Avenue LLC tops out the Public Advocate's list of the city's worst landlords with a whopping 3,352 open violations across 13 properties -- including the worst building in the city, 940 Grand Concourse, whose 660 violations include overflowing garbage rooms, leaky ceilings, and rat infestations so bad that tenants are afraid of walking through the hallways. Extreme negligence appears to be a family tradition: 3525 Decatur is run by Robin Shimoff, whose father, Jacob Selechnik, was an infamous slumlord in his own right. (Presumably, the trash and rodent problems that plague her properties are not an issue at Shimoff's own home, which, according to the Daily News, is a seven-bedroom, \$1.2 million house in Rockland County.)

*And one terrible story from 2010 gets an update:*

### **The Negligent Killer**

Vasilos Gerazouis was not the one who started the fire at 2033 86th Street in Bensonhurst in 2010 (the man responsible there is Daniel Ignacio, who tossed a roll of toilet paper doused in lighter fluid through a window). Gerazouis was, however, the one who divided the building's single-family apartments into six separate units each, making it impossible for the firefighters to reach the tenants in time; five of them died as emergency responders made their way through a maze of illegal walls. In November, four years after the incident, Gerazouis pleaded guilty to criminally negligent homicide.

**See also:** [The NYC Public Advocate's Worst Landlords of 2014](#)