



EXCLUSIVE: Multimillionaire Manhattan landlord probed for possibly using illegal tactics to force out rent-stabilized tenants

State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman has launched an investigation into the tactics used by Steven Croman, 47, to push rent-stabilized tenants out of their valuable apartments, the Daily News has learned. Croman, who owns 100 mostly residential buildings across Manhattan, portrays himself as a philanthropist, raising money for causes like the 92nd Street Y.

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Steven Croman, seen here with Harriet Croman, is now the subject of an investigation into potentially illegal tactics used to force rent-stabilized tenants out of their apartments, the Daily News has learned.

The multimillionaire Manhattan landlord whose ex-cop employee is accused of terrorizing tenants is now himself the subject of an investigation, the Daily News has learned.

State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman has launched a probe into the potentially illegal tactics used by landlord Steven Croman, 47, to force rent-stabilized tenants out of their valuable apartments, a source said.

The AG is investigating potential violations of city and state laws, including numerous infractions related to tenant harassment by Croman, the source said.

Schneiderman's spokeswoman, Melissa Grace, declined to answer questions about the probe, instead issuing a brief statement.

"While we cannot comment on potential or ongoing investigations, the attorney general is committed to ensuring that no one — no matter how rich or well connected — is above the law. We are prepared to take action against landlords who use illegal tactics to force rent-regulated tenants out of their homes to raise rents."

Croman, who owns 100 mostly residential buildings across Manhattan, portrays himself as a philanthropist, raising money for causes like the 92nd Street Y.

This week Schneiderman slapped a "cease and desist" order on one of his employees, ex-NYPD cop Anthony Falconite, a private investigator tenants say has engaged in a campaign of harassment and intimidation to force them out.

Numerous tenants say Croman regularly files frivolous lawsuits, blows off repairs and uses every trick in the book to get them out so he can rent units at much higher rates.



BRYAN PACE FOR NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Cordelia Winton (pictured) and her husband, Graham, returned from vacation to find that the steam heat got turned up so high on July 4 that it ruined their belongings and furniture.

Just ask Croman tenants Cordelia and Graham Winton, who live in his building on E. 8th St. in the East Village.

Croman bought the building last year and offered buyouts to the Wintons and other tenants. Several took the deal and moved out. The Wintons declined the offer.

Tenants above and below them left and now those apartments rent for around \$6,000. The Wintons pay about \$1,250.

On July 2, the Wintons went on vacation and returned to a nightmare. Cordelia Winton returned first on July 19, and when she arrived, tenants told her someone had cranked the steam heat in the building on July 4 high enough to cause steam to pour out from her apartment into the hall.

When she opened the door, she gazed upon a disaster.

The heat was so extreme, wine bottles had uncorked, spewing

their contents on the floor. A glass cabinet shattered, wood shelves warped and collapsed, the plastic spray arm in the sink melted, an outlet popped out of the wall and the ceiling and walls bubbled.

If they'd left their cats behind as they usually do, they'd have two dead kitties, the Wintons said.



KEN MURRAY/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Ex-cop Anthony Falconite, one of Croman's employees, is a private investigator tenants say has engaged in a campaign of harassment and intimidation to force them out.

Croman's employees claim an unnamed "contractor" had mistakenly turned the boiler on max and left. But Cordelia Winton said the super came to the building

while they were away and turned off the boiler after other tenants complained about the heat.

She said the super failed to notify them of what happened, or they would have returned early to take care of the damage.

Since then Croman has done nothing to make amends, and the Wintons have given up hope that that will change.

"My son goes to a good school nearby. I've always paid my rent on time. I've dealt with the problems in the apartment,"

Cordelia Winton said. "I just want to live in peace. I just want to be left alone."

Messages left with Croman Friday were not returned