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# Landlord who told tenants to use fire escape during renovation wants \$1,056 rent hike to pay for 'outrageous' botched project

By JASPER LO and DAVE GOLDINER  
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS | JUN 16, 2019



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Building resident Carol Maillard, 68, has lived in the building for more than 30 years. She was told to use the fire escape during construction but her apartment only has a fire basket that has no ladder to the ground. (Jasper K Lo/New York Daily News)

A Manhattan landlord who told tenants to use the fire escape while the building's only stairs were being repaired has a nasty new message for residents — the bill's on you.

The brazen landlord has the chutzpah to order rent-regulated tenants — including a Grammy-winning singer — to pay monthly rent hikes of up to \$1,056 to cover the costs of replacing the stairs at the landmark five-story walk-up building on W. 83rd Street.

Adding insult to injury, Pine Management wants to tack on six-figure charges for fines and violations the city slapped on it for starting the job without providing a safe way for tenants to get out of their apartments.

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do with improvements to the building."

Pine Management did not respond to a request for comment.



The main stairwell at 167 West 83rd St. was replaced and tenants were allegedly left with the bill by the property's manager. (Jasper K. Lo/New York Daily News)

The landlord plans to pay the \$777,000 bill by raising the rent for all 10 apartments, which include studios and one-bedrooms. Five of the apartments are rent stabilized, meaning rent hikes are normally strictly controlled, and all of those are occupied by senior citizens.

"It wasn't OK when they wanted the tenants to climb out of their windows to get in and out of their own apartments," said Sarah Crean, an aide to City Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal (D-Upper West Side). "It's not OK now that they want them to pay more for their own mistakes."

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the work, the owners told tenants to use the main entrance.

The city slapped the landlord with a string of violations and ordered a safer process for the renovation work.

“Our doors were covered with plastic sheets and we had to zip in and out to get into our apartments,” said tenant Carol Maillard, 68, a founding member of the Grammy-winning singing group Sweet Honey in the Rock who pays about \$1,000 a month in rent. “If anything happens here, I mean, how do I get out? How does anybody get out?”

Building resident Joy Hooks noticed sparks flying into her apartment through the bottom of her front door as contractors welded the metal banisters and stairs in the main hallway. (Jasper Lo/New York Daily News)

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Joy Hook, who has lived in the building for 39 years, said the job turned into a nightmare that went on for nearly a year.

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“We had planks in the hallway with string for bannisters,” said Hook, who lives on the third floor. “It was scary,

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Tenants say the whole project was unnecessary and claim contractors told them the landlord paid much less than he claimed by getting dozens of buildings done in a package deal.

Now that the work is finally over, tenants were stunned to find out the landlord wants them to foot the bill.

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Included in the sky-high tab are questionable items like the \$100,000 costs of hiring fire guards that were ordered by the city after the unsafe project was reported. Other less-than-kosher claims included the costs of stop-work orders issued by the city when the construction was deemed not up to snuff.

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