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## Landlord Accused of Harassment Leaves Tenants Without Gas For Months

By Gwynne Hogan (//www.dnainfo.com/new-york/about-us/our-team/editorial-team/gwynne-hogan) | November 9, 2015 2:42pm

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HELLS KITCHEN — From brownies to steaks, David Makman, 36, has had to cook all his meals on a waffle iron in his West 45th Street apartment.

“It’s like a George Foreman Grill but everything looks like waffles,” said Makman, who’s lived at 355 W. 45th St. since he was a child.

“It was funny for the first six months.”

Makman and tenants on his block have had to come up with creative cooking solutions since the gas in their three buildings — all owned by the same “worst landlord” Steven Croman — was turned off on April 10, according building residents and court records.

Con Edison shut off the gas when inspectors discovered pipe work installed without a permit, according to Department of Buildings (<http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/tags/department-of-buildings>) records.

Residents of the three West 45th Street buildings suspect that the delay in restoring their gas is the latest attempt by Croman’s 9300 Realty (<http://www.9300realty.com/>) to get them frustrated enough to pack up and leave, they said.

“We have fallen victim to his usual pursuit of trying to get rent-stabilized tenants to move,” said Roberta Groves, 67.

Groves, along with two other residents and the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development, is suing the building owner in separate suits in an attempt to get the service restored.

Croman, who owns around one hundred properties around the city (<http://www.9300realty.com/>), made Public Advocate Letitia James’ 2014 worst landlord (<http://landlordwatchlist.com/#/landlords>) list and is

being investigated by the state for potentially illegal (<http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/exclusive-millionaire-manhattan-landlord-probed-force-tenants-article-1.1880709>) tactics of ousting rent-stabilized tenants, a spokesman for State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's office confirmed (<http://www.ag.ny.gov/about-attorney-general>).

Groves said soon after Croman bought the buildings at 351-357 West 45th Street in late 2014, she was offered a buyout.

"All they offered was \$10,000. It's ridiculous, isn't it?," she said. "Where can I go to the live in Hell's Kitchen for ten grand?"

A manager for Croman's 9300 Realty defended the company's actions and denied accusations that they were trying to get rid of long-time residents. He also said that the company was cooperating with the Attorney General's investigation.

"When we purchased the buildings they were in an extreme state of disrepair," said Oren Goldstein (<https://www.linkedin.com/pub/oren-goldstein/6/53b/a57>), a manager at Croman's realty company. "We always try to do what we can for our residents especially in a situation like this. There's nothing more we could possibly do."

Goldstein said all tenants were offered hot plates and electric stoves in lieu of gas.

However, some tenants who hadn't sued the landlord said they were not offered electric stoves.

The company didn't file for permits to repair the gas lines in the buildings until early August, four months after the gas was shut off and after several residents had already sued, according to court and DOB records.

Goldstein said the gas was scheduled to be turned on at 351 W. 45th St. on Tuesday, but added that he did not know the timeline for the other two buildings.

"We're at Con Ed's mercy," he said.

Joy Faber, a Con Ed spokeswoman, confirmed the Nov. 10 switch-on date for 351 W 45th St. but said the landlord hadn't notified them of repairs in either of the two remaining buildings.

"The work has to be done with the landlord first," Faber said. "Until that happens we can't make any adjustment."

Meanwhile, exhausted tenants hold out hope that life might return to normal in the near future.

"This shouldn't be allowed...This guy should have to suffer like we suffer," said Robin Rutherford, 60, who has lived in the building for almost 30 years and is also suing Croman to get her gas back.

"We're just regular folks."

A spokeswoman for HPD did not return a request for comment.

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