

Sentencing of Notorious Landlord Steve Croman Delayed for High Holy Days

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Steve Croman showed up to his scheduled sentencing Sept. 19 at Manhattan Criminal Court, but a judge agreed to put it off until Oct. 3.

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MANHATTAN — Notorious landlord Steve Croman, slated to be sentenced Tuesday morning to a year in jail, will not begin serving his time for another two weeks after a judge agreed to delay the sentencing to allow him to observe the High Holy days, a source said.

In June, Croman struck a plea deal with Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's office (<https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20170606/east-village/steve-croman-plea-deal-attorney-general-sentencing-fraud>) after a yearlong investigation revealed he had committed tax fraud and scammed banks out of more than \$45 million in refinancing loans by falsely claiming rent-stabilized units in his buildings were market-rate.

Though indicted on 20 felony charges that could have landed him in prison for 25 years, Croman secured the more lenient sentence by pleading guilty to three of those charges.

Croman's lawyer, Benjamin Brafman, asked Judge Jill Konviser to put off the sentencing until Oct. 3. Although the attorney general's office objected, Konviser granted the request.

The special assistant attorney general prosecuting the case said the office had objected to the delay because the initial sentencing was already unusually late. A sentencing would typically take place six to eight weeks after a decision was made, noted Travis Hill, and Croman had already been given three months.

"It's time for him to start serving his sentence," Hill said outside the courtroom Tuesday.

Brafman refused to speak outside the courtroom.

Dozens of beleaguered tenants of Croman-owned buildings who turned up to witness the sentencing were dismayed by the action.

One East Village resident said the landlord had not been so understanding when workers riddled her building with toxic substances the night of Christmas Eve a few years ago.

"The adjournment is for him to enjoy his Jewish holidays — but Steve Croman, in the apartment below me, gutted it on the evening of Christmas Eve," said Carol Leland, 60, who has lived at 321 E. 10th St. for 40 years.

"He started at 4 p.m. when he knew a lot of us probably wouldn't be home for the holidays and destroyed our apartment with lead, asbestos, crystalline silica, and all of us have been sick for years."

Leland said she and her husband had both fallen severely ill as a result of the substances that spread through the building as a result of the work — her husband contracted pneumonia, she said, while she has emphysema.

Most recently, she said, her roommate's Yorkshire Terrier died of kidney failure in May after eating toxic chemicals that flooded the apartment due to shoddy repair work. Workers had slathered the building's exterior in a toxic paint-removing substance then power-washed it.

Because her rotting third-floor window frames had not been repaired, as she repeatedly requested before the scheduled power-washing, the water seeped into her apartment, bringing with it the toxic substances.

The 7-year-old, 5-pound Yorkie lapped up the water that leaked through and died of kidney failure a week later, said Leland.

"When I saw the stains from the pools of water I thought, 'Oh s--t, she might have licked up that water,'" recalled Leland, noting she had seen the dog lap water up off the floor in the past. "She was dying of kidney failure — there was nothing we could do."

The dog had just recently had a checkup and had been in perfect health, she said.

She said building management with 9300 Realty, Croman's company, had promised to fix her windows before the exterior work but never did.

"That's what they do," she said. "They say they're gonna do it, then they just don't do it."

A representative for Croman's 9300 Realty group did not immediately return a request for comment.

