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Dear Family Member:

As you may be aware, on Thursday, May 3 the *New York Post* reported that someone broke into a clearly marked City vehicle and stole a laptop that contains some information about the ongoing recovery operations at and around the World Trade Center site. The vehicle that was broken into was used by Mr. Frank DePaolo, the Office of Chief Medical Examiner's (OCME) Director of Special Operations who is responsible for coordinating operations for the ongoing search for human remains at and around the World Trade Center site. Mr. DePaolo was on official City business at the time of the theft.

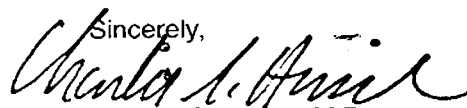
The theft of a laptop from a locked official New York City vehicle in broad daylight was brazen and unusual. The thief stole several bags, including a bag containing the laptop. Although he dropped two bags when he was chased by good samaritans who witnessed the break-in, the laptop has not been recovered. Mr. DePaolo immediately called the NYPD and alerted the Chief of Detectives that the laptop had been stolen and that it contained sensitive information. The NYPD made an extraordinary effort to find the thief and the computer, though neither has yet been found. We don't know how the *New York Post* learned about the theft, but there was substantial law enforcement activity in the area where the break-in occurred and it likely was not difficult for a reporter to learn that something had happened at the location.

Some have raised questions about data security and the nature and use of the materials on the stolen laptop. The laptop in question was City-issued and contained password protected case files and other work-related information. As part of its standard operating procedure, OCME photographs all potential human remains found during the recovery effort. Some images of bone fragments were stored in the laptop but none of the images are linked to a named victim of the 9/11 attacks, and the laptop does not contain any personal information about 9/11 victims.

In addition, the laptop contained what has been reported as "lecture" materials. These materials are prepared by OCME and used to train NYPD investigators and other professionals on forensic topics and mass fatality disaster planning. They are designed only to train and inform City employees and are not used for anything but official City business. The laptop also contains a presentation about the World Trade Center recovery operation prepared by OCME for use as part of an official, OCME-sponsored symposium for forensic and other experts. Mr. DePaolo is authorized to carry this information with him on a laptop as he travels to the various operating sites connected with the ongoing recovery effort at and around the World Trade Center site. Also, he used the laptop to work from home. Again, none of these files contained any personal information about any 9/11 victims.

I share the disgust you have expressed over this criminal act. I urge you to keep in mind that not only did Mr. DePaolo do nothing wrong, he is a dedicated employee who has been working 6 to 7 days a week (often more than 12 hour days) on this project for many months.

Following this theft, OCME and DoITT have undertaken a review of the computer and data-security measures currently in place at OCME and will make any enhancements necessary to ensure the security of sensitive operational data. I hope that this information addresses your questions about the unfortunate theft last week. The Police Department is still working to recover the stolen laptop and we will do everything we can to prevent any future losses of this important and sensitive information.

Sincerely,

Charles S. Hirsch, M.D.