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Victims of Con Edison's Past Alleged Negligence and their Family and Friends Unite in Support of Victims of East Harlem Building Explosion

In the Wake of the Tragic Building Explosion in East Harlem, Victims of Previous Utility-Related Accidents and their Family and Friends Unite to Call on Con Edison and New York City to Replace Decaying Utility Infrastructure to Avoid Further Tragedies.

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Press Conference Tomorrow, March 19, 2014 at 2:00 PM at Wigdor LLP

NEW YORK – (March 18, 2014) – On Wednesday, March 12, 2014, the lives of eight people were lost and the injuries of many others occurred as the result of an explosion and the collapse of two buildings in East Harlem.

Unfortunately, based on initial reports, it appears that this may possibly be the result of Consolidated Edison's ("Con Ed") negligence and indifference toward the decay of its gas distribution system. If Con Ed is responsible, it would not be the first time according to prior lawsuits that have alleged Con Ed's continued failure to maintain utility systems that have injured or killed New Yorkers. Indeed, Gregory McCullough, Judith Bailey, the family of Kunta Oza, and Kim Tinnin know firsthand the devastation of Con Ed's alleged repeated failure to prioritize human life over its bottom line. Today, these individuals, as well as their family and friends, have united in support of the victims of the East Harlem tragedy and to call on Con Ed and New York City to replace the City's crumbling, utility-related infrastructure with safe, modern equipment.

In 2007, Douglas H. Wigdor of Wigdor LLP along with Derek Sells of the Cochran Firm represented Gregory McCullough, a 21-year-old man who hoped to one day serve his country as a Marine. As alleged in the complaint, Mr. McCullough suffered third-degree burns over 80% of his body and was critically injured by a steam pipe that exploded under 41st Street and Lexington

Avenue, where he simply had the misfortune to be walking at the time. The complaint in that case referred to Con Ed's "decaying" and "explosion-prone" steam pipes as a "ticking time-bomb" that Con Ed has continually chosen to ignore in an "unconscionable and ongoing public betrayal." Wigdor LLP also represented Judith Bailey, a 30-year-old mother of two who worked at a school for the mentally disabled at the time, in connection with the severe burns she suffered from the same explosion.

Also in 2007, Wigdor LLP and the Cochran Firm represented Ramgopal Oza, whose wife, Kunta Oza, was yet another victim of an explosion allegedly caused by Con Ed's negligence. The facts surrounding Ms. Oza's death were harrowingly similar to the recent events in East Harlem. Ms. Oza was a resident of Sunnyside, Queens, who was in her home during a gas explosion, heartbreakingly resulting in her death. Residents in the area of Ms. Oza's home had complained of the smell of gas for weeks. The complaint alleged that Con Ed's "gas distribution network still contains thousands of miles of dangerous, antiquated mains in many parts of New York City." Additional gas-related explosions killed or injured New Yorkers in Queens in 2008, 2009, and 2013.

Currently, Wigdor LLP and the Cochran Firm represent Kim Tinnin, mother of Lauren Abraham. On October 29, 2012, Lauren Abraham, a 23-year-old makeup artist and teacher-in-training, walked outside of her home in Richmond Hill, Queens during Hurricane Sandy and came in contact with a severed electrical wire. As with its gas distribution system and steam pipes, the complaint in the Tinnin matter alleges that Con Ed failed to maintain its power lines, putting New Yorkers' lives at risk. The complaint also alleges that Con Ed failed to implement industry-standard technology that would have enabled it to disable downed power lines remotely and could have saved Ms. Abraham's life.

Mr. Wigdor and Mr. Sells have worked tirelessly to achieve justice for victims of Con Ed's negligence. Mr. Wigdor declared: "The individuals here today know the pain and suffering that the victims of the East Harlem tragedy are enduring all too well. Proactive measures are long overdue to ensure the safety of New Yorkers and we will not rest until our City's infrastructure is brought into the 21st century." Mr. Sells added, "The delivery of gas and energy in today's society should be a safe process. We can no longer allow the systems that bring us power to remain constant threats to our lives."

Reverend William Devlin, R.N., B.S.N., M.A., currently serves as the Clergy Emergency Prayer Coordinator for Victims of the East Harlem Explosion and the Pastor of the Infinity Bible Church. Reverend Devlin offered and observed, "As we continue to pray for these families and now bury the deceased, our prayer is that poor neighborhoods in our City will no longer be neglected when it comes to upgrading our infrastructure. There appears to be a disparity."

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Additional information will be provided at the press conference tomorrow, March 19, 2014 at 2 p.m. about the background of these events. Prior victims, clients and Reverend Devlin will be present at the press conference, as well as other friends and family.

About Wigdor LLP: Wigdor LLP is a law firm specializing in high-profile, complex litigation and investigations as well as civil and criminal trials. They can be reached at 212-257-6800, contact@wigdorlaw.com or www.wigdorlaw.com.

About The Cochran Firm: The Cochran Firm is one of the largest personal injury plaintiff law firms in the country and specializes in a wide-range of civil litigation from medical malpractice to wrongful death cases. It was founded by the late Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. They can be reached at 212-553-9120 or www.cochranfirm.com.