

Hi Lillian, we are providing this response to your questions in lieu of an interview:

Response attributed to DOB spokesperson

Since day one, under Mayor Bowser's leadership, the District government has been working with residents of 1433 Columbia Road NW, providing them with resources and guidance through this very challenging time. DOB's mission is to ensure safety for residents, and the building is unsafe to inhabit. Landlords must obey District law by providing properties that are safe, habitable, and livable. Our goal is to work with property owners so they fix violations. DOB is ready to issue the permits to the Landlord to do the necessary repairs and until that happens, the building unfortunately must stay closed. In the interim, the District government is working with the tenants on removing their belongings if they desire and is also connecting them with community resources.

Background

It is a property owner's responsibility under District housing law to ensure their buildings are in safe and habitable condition (through regular maintenance, etc.). The Department of Buildings enforces housing code violations and strongly relies on formal complaints from residents--since they are most keenly aware of issues in their buildings--as a necessary and critical step in helping them fix problems.

DOB encourages District tenants to first work with their landlords to resolve issues. If the landlord is unresponsive, tenants should report any suspected housing and property maintenance violations directly to DOB at dob.dc.gov or 202-671-3500 so we can schedule an inspection as soon as possible. In addition, the public can view all open violations for any address on DOB's Public Dashboard, using the Landlord Violations Tool in the "Violations and Abatement" tab.

DOB does conduct proactive inspections, primarily during the permitting process at the time of construction or renovation, and when data suggests we can play an especially impactful role in resident health and safety. However, hearing from residents is really the most efficient way to address housing code violations.

Regarding 1433 Columbia Road NW, the DC Fire Department preliminary determined the cause as an accidental gas explosion, and would be the party issuing any final determinations.

After the explosion, the DC Department of General Services, working with Washington Gas, conducted testing that found leaks in the gas lines throughout the building, so the gas won't be restored to the building until Washington Gas determines that the gas lines are fixed. This also means the electricity will remain off because it is unsafe to have electricity running in a building where gas may be leaking. Repairing the damage to the building and the gas lines at 1433 Columbia Road NW is the property owner's responsibility.

To date, DOB issued 37 Notices of Infraction (NOIs) (currently at \$45,675 in fines) due to this incident, which can be seen by searching for the address (September 2024 items) on our [Public Dashboard](#). The only other violations on the dashboard are based on proactive inspections conducted in 2018--six years ago.

While NOIs have associated fines, our goal is for property owners to fix violations through abatement. Generally, a property owner will have 60 days from the date of receiving the NOI to abate to waive or reduce fines. DOB will reinspect after 60 days to confirm abatement.

DOB also issued a Correction Order to the owners of 1433 Columbia Road, which describes legally required actions the property owners must take. This one:

- Requires owners to provide DOB, within seven days, their plan to return the property to habitability. One record owner has acknowledged receipt of the Correction Order and informally told DOB that a plan to return the property to habitability is forthcoming. DOB has yet to receive a plan as of October 11.
- Requires the owner to execute that plan within **sixty days**.
- Owners can appeal the order to the Office of Administrative Hearings--an independent agency--within 10 business days (and the Office of the Attorney General will want the OAH order issued before taking action. OAH can take 4-6 weeks).