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## Local 237 Head Cites Feds In Boy's Elevator Death; Says Cutbacks Delay Repairs

By DAVID SIMS

Teamsters Local 237 President Gregory Floyd said Aug. 20 that Federal reductions in funding for public housing were a contributing factor in the maintenance deficiencies at the Housing Authority housing that figured in the death of Jacob Neuman, the 5-year-old child who fell down an open elevator shaft in a Brooklyn apartment complex a day earlier.



**GREGORY FLOYD:** Deferring maintenance can cost lives.

"The incident serves as an appalling example of the Federal Government's failure to meet its obligation to fund public housing," Mr. Floyd said in a letter to Mayor Bloomberg. "On behalf of the 9,000 NYCHA employees I represent ... and the more than 400,000 residents of public housing, I am requesting that you call on Federal officials to address this problem immediately."

### A Malfunction and a Deadly Slip

Jacob was on his way to school with his 8-year-old brother Israel when the elevator in the Taylor-Wythe complex in Williamsburg became stuck between floors. The two boys pressed the elevator's buttons until the doors came open, at which point Jacob crawled out of the elevator and jumped to the 10th-floor landing, where he lost his footing and fell down the elevator shaft, approximately 100 feet.

It was subsequently revealed that the elevator had been rated "unsatisfactory" last October and had reportedly stalled between floors five times in the last six months. "The elevator where the accident occurred was scheduled to be modernized in 2004, but the work was twice deferred because of cuts in Federal aid," noted Mr. Floyd.

"Other basic maintenance services, including carpentry, sanitation, painting, heat and air-conditioning and HVAC maintenance are also delayed because of Federal cutbacks," he continued. "Facing a nearly \$200-million operating deficit, NYCHA is daily losing the ability to meet the needs of its residents."

### Laments Lack of Maintenance

Mr. Floyd told this newspaper he had visited the Taylor-Wythe complex and spoken to his members who work there, but emphasized that its problems were not unique. "The problems are the same in there as they are in all of the NYCHA developments," he said. "You can see the deterioration of property due to the lack of preventive maintenance."

"What should be done is, the elevators should be replaced," he went on. "What could be done? They're doing everything they can do with the money that's been allotted to NYCHA. If something's not done, more of these things will happen." Reinforcing the point in his letter, Mr. Floyd

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said that the incident "should stalk the conscience of government decision- he admitted that "even if NYCHA was properly funded, this accident may have occurred."

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Mr. Floyd is in attendance this week at the Democratic National Convention in Denver as an alternate delegate. He said that "every congressperson and every Senator I speak to, I will let them know the importance of Federal funding for public housing ... and I will have stories with me, and I will give them copies of the stories and tell them that we need their support." He added that U.S. Sen. Charles E. Schumer had shown "foresight" in sending a letter Aug. 1 to the Senate Appropriations Committee urging more funding for public housing.

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