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LIU AUDIT QUESTIONS ELEVATOR SAFETY

NYCHA and DOB Found Lacking in Elevator Maintenance and Repairs

New York, NY - The Department of Buildings (DOB) and the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) were the subjects of two separate audits into their respective elevator programs, and the results showed that both agencies performed poorly, according to New York City Comptroller John C. Liu.

“These two agencies, tasked with ensuring that elevators are safe for New Yorkers seem to be taking the tax payers for a ride,” said Comptroller Liu. “New York is a vertical city. If we cannot properly maintain elevators then we could be putting people at risk.”

Department of Buildings

According to Comptroller Liu the overall finding of this audit, if not corrected, could result in safety hazards since **one-fifth of the elevators sampled had not been inspected**. The Department of Buildings is responsible for inspecting more than 59,000 passenger and freight elevators in 20,000 buildings.

Chief among the findings:

- The DOB, through its contracted inspectors, failed to carry out required inspections for nearly 20 percent of all sampled elevators in 2009.
- DOB has a persistent backlog of nearly 10 percent of all elevators (5,985) that were overdue for inspections – causing greater likelihood that a problem can persist.

The DOB agreed with the audit findings, stating: “The Department is taking steps to improve our existing procedures to address the issues identified in your report. We view your recommendations as helpful in furthering our commitment to providing quality public service while utilizing all our available resources.”

The recommendations made by Comptroller Liu to DOB include:

- Review and strengthen procedures to ensure that periodic inspections of elevators are carried out promptly each year.
- Establish benchmarks to identify inspection backlogs as they occur and design procedures to address them promptly to prevent the backlog from growing too large.

The scope of the audit was Fiscal Year 2009 and 2010 (through May 12, 2010).

New York City Housing Authority

The second audit released today by Comptroller Liu found serious problems with NYCHA's efforts to provide preventive maintenance on elevators. In fact, more than **40 percent of the maintenance tasks scheduled for elevators sampled was not performed.**

"There is clearly a risk in not conducting timely repairs and necessary maintenance. NYCHA shouldn't wait until it's too late to fix these programs," said Comptroller Liu. "This is not only a public safety issue, but a potential financial problem, as the City could be held liable for damages incurred as a result of poor agency operations."

TOP THREE NYCHA DEVELOPMENTS WITH POOR PREVENTIVE ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE

NAME	AREA	PERCENTAGE OF MAINTENANCE TASKS NOT PERFORMED
Thurgood Marshall Plaza	Washington Heights, Manhattan	84%
McKinley Houses	Hunts Point, Bronx	55%
Alfred Smith Houses	Downtown, Manhattan	55%

Other Chief Findings:

- NYCHA, on average, took nearly 14 hours to resolve elevator outages – leaving building residents underserved, which could pose safety risks to NYCHA tenants.
- NYCHA did not promptly address deficiencies found during their elevator tests. In fact the problems went unaddressed for an average of 148 days.

NYCHA agreed to immediately implement seven out of the eight recommendations in the audit. The remaining recommendation is scheduled to be implemented before the close of 2010.

The recommendations made by Comptroller Liu to NYCHA include:

- Ensure that required preventative maintenance work is performed and that all such work is supported by preventative maintenance checklists, completed by work teams, kept on file at each development and recorded in NYCHA's computer system.
- Document instances of and justifications for not performing scheduled preventative maintenance work. Repeated periods of nonperformance should be investigated and corrective action taken.

According to NYCHA, its 3,324 elevators represent one of the largest fleets in the nation and five percent of all elevators in New York City. The audit was conducted November 2008 through April 2010.

Comptroller Liu credited Deputy Comptroller for Audit H. Tina Kim and her team for presenting the findings. The full reports are available at www.comptroller.nyc.gov/audits.