



New York City Comptroller
John C. Liu

NEWS RELEASE

PR13-04-053
Contact: Matthew Sweeney, (212) 669-3747

April 11, 2013
Page(s): 5

LIU: CITY SLOW TO REPAIR PLAYGROUNDS

*Audit Finds Four of Five Boroughs Late in Fixing Damaged
Or Dangerous Equipment and Surfaces in Parks*

NEW YORK, N.Y. — City Comptroller John C. Liu today announced that a series of audits of the Parks Department found the agency has been slow to make both routine and emergency repairs to playgrounds.

“It’s bad enough that the City is slow in keeping up with routine maintenance and repairs to playgrounds, but it is unconscionable for the City to drag its feet on fixing hazards that can injure children,” Comptroller Liu said. “No child should get hurt on a playground or play equipment that the City knows is damaged. The Parks Department needs to better prioritize repairs to our children’s play areas.”

The Parks Department oversees more than 1,000 playgrounds. The agency’s district offices in each borough issue repair orders based on the observations of their staff and complaints from the public. Many of these orders are for routine repairs and maintenance, but a small number are issued for repairs of hazardous conditions, such as dead tree limbs hanging over play areas, surface problems that can cause tripping, or exposed metal on play equipment.

The audits found that many routine — and even some hazardous — repairs go untouched for months, often taking more than a year to be resolved. In addition, the audit found that the Parks Department has treated many conditions that could easily have been considered hazardous and classified as needing “Immediate Attention” by its Park Inspection Standards — thereby requiring attention within 30 days — as routine. Although emergency conditions are to be resolved in 30 days, the agency lacks any guidelines for timely response to routine repairs and maintenance. Among the five boroughs, only Staten Island playgrounds were consistently maintained and repaired in a timely manner.

The audits examined the Parks Department’s handling of work orders related to playgrounds, including Immediate Attention conditions reported by its Parks Inspection Program (PIP) inspectors, from April 1, 2011, through March 2012. Comptroller Liu’s audits called on the Parks Department to better prioritize the repairs in order to focus on repairing hazardous conditions expeditiously.

Manhattan

The Parks Department issued 3,957 work orders for Manhattan playgrounds from April 1, 2011, through March 31, 2012. Most were routine work ranging from turning on water fountains and spray showers to repairs of play equipment. Of the 3,152 repairs (80 percent), the Parks Department reportedly completed (as of June 18, 2012), it took more than one month to complete 32 percent (996) of these repairs.

Additionally, there were 392 Immediate Attention conditions, such as trip hazards, that were identified by PIP inspectors and were supposed to be resolved in 30 days, although 36 of them were not.

Comptroller Liu's audit also found that dozens of playground conditions could easily have been classified as requiring Immediate Attention if the conditions had been found by the PIP inspectors, but were not because they were reported by Parks supervisors and were not repaired for many months. (See table below)

Manhattan Potential Immediate Attention Hazards with Longest Wait Times for Repair

Hazard	Playground	Date Reported	Date Repaired	Days Elapsed
Fall hazard on very top step at 110 th Street & Manhattan Avenue	Morningside Park	5/20/2011	3/8/2012	293
Trip hazard at tree pit from broken tree post	Clement Clarke Moore Park	5/4/2011	2/24/2012	296
Trip hazard on ground around water cover	Hell's Kitchen Park	5/4/2011	2/24/2012	296
Worn out s-hook at bottom of climbing chains	McCaffrey Playground	4/20/2011	2/16/2012	302
Up lifted concrete trip hazard on sidewalk outside playground	Gutenberg Playground	4/16/2011	2/16/2012	306
Dead limbs hanging over play equipment	Matthews -Palmer Playground	6/5/2011	5/24/2012	354
Large limb broken and hanging down over 23 rd Street sidewalk	Asser Levy Playground	5/31/2011	6/4/2012	370

Brooklyn

The Parks Department issued 4,731 work orders for Brooklyn playground repairs and maintenance from April 1, 2011, through March 31, 2012. The Parks Department completed just 3,541 (75 percent) of these work orders as of September 24, 2012. Comptroller Liu's audit found that, among the completed work orders, just 58 percent (2,043) were resolved in 30 days and 25 percent (868) took more than three months to correct.

In addition, PIP inspectors identified 583 Immediate Attention conditions, of which 46 (8 percent) were not resolved within the required 30-day period. Some of these took as long as 387 days to resolve.

Finally, Comptroller Liu's audit identified 63 of the work orders that could easily have been classified as needing Immediate Attention, requiring correction in 30 days, if the conditions had been found by PIP inspectors. (See table below)

Brooklyn Potential Immediate Attention Hazards with Longest Wait Times for Repair

Hazard	Playground	Date Reported	Date Repaired	Days Elapsed
Weld loose railing on Play Equipment. 5-foot fall hazard	Benson Playground	5/26/2011	2/15/2012	266
Exposed bolt on bottom railing of play equipment	Ethan Allen Playground	4/19/2011	1/11/2012	267
Trip hazard-missing cobble stones on East 68 th Street opposite fire hydrant	Hickman Playground	5/9/2011	3/31/2012	327
Tree roots pushing up pavers causing a trip hazard	Jackie Robinson Park	7/31/2011	9/17/2012	414
Repair/Replace climbing on play equipment. Coating cracked, pinch hazard	Mother Cabrini Park	5/17/2011	8/28/2012	469

Queens

The Parks Department issued 6,164 work orders for Queens playground repairs and maintenance from April 1, 2011, through March 31, 2012. Of the 5,269 work orders that the Parks Department managed to resolve by May 29, 2012, Comptroller Liu's audit found only 64 percent (3,385) were corrected within 30 days, and another 16 percent (832) waited more than 90 days.

In addition, PIP inspectors identified 527 Immediate Attention conditions, of which 58 (11 percent) were not fixed within the required 30-day period.

Finally, Comptroller Liu's audit identified 55 work orders that could easily have been classified as hazardous conditions that needed attention within 30 days. Some of these took more than 200 days to resolve. (See table below)

Queens Potential Immediate Attention Hazards with Longest Wait Times for Repair

Hazard	Playground	Date Reported	Date Repaired	Days Elapsed
Uncovered manhole	P.S. 42/Alameda Playground	7/30/2011	2/12/2012	198
Loose rail on both sides of monkey bars platform	Glendale Playground	6/18/2011	1/12/2012	209
Protruding chain link fencing at eye level to be removed in handball court	Leo Ehrenreich-Austin St. Playground	6/19/2011	1/20/2012	215
QBC/A [Queens Boro Command/ High Priority] Please cold patch in front of water fountain ASAP	Astoria Park-Charybdis Playground	6/24/2011	3/14/2012	264
QBC/S [Queens Boro Command/ Safety] Several uplifted curled edges of safety surface	London Planetree Playground	7/24/2011	4/20/2012	272

Bronx

The Parks Department issued 6,040 work orders for Bronx playground repairs and maintenance from April 1, 2011, through March 31, 2012. Of the 5,432 work orders that the Parks Department was able to address by September 24, 2012, the audit found that 90 percent (4,916) were completed within 30 days.

In addition, PIP inspectors identified 239 Immediate Attention conditions, of which 12 (5 percent) were not resolved within 30 days. In fact, some took from 31 days to 129 days to remedy.

Finally, the Bronx audit found 32 work orders that could easily have been classified as hazards demanding repair within 30 days. (See table below)

Bronx Potential Immediate Attention Hazards with Longest Wait Times for Repair

Hazard	Playground	Date Reported	Date Repaired	Days Elapsed
Hole in handball court surface, trip hazards at curb, by comfort station, and work out play equipment	Captain Rivera Playground	11/12/2011	8/9/2012	271
Remove dead limb, entrance to basketball handball courts	Matthews Muliner Playground	8/31/2011	6/11/2012	286
Very large limb down over play equipment	St Mary's Playground South	8/29/2011	6/14/2012	291
Large dead limb over sidewalk. Can fall on parked vehicles, Story Ave. side	Story Playground	4/19/2011	4/24/2012	371
Dead branch hanging over swings, approximately 20 feet long and 6 inches in diameter	Ciccarone Park	7/18/2011	8/3/2012	383

Staten Island

The Parks Department issued 1,301 work orders for Staten Island playground repairs and maintenance from April 1, 2011, through March 31, 2012. Of the 1,206 work orders completed by May 29, 2012, 83 percent (1,001) were completed within 30 days.

In addition, PIP inspectors identified 90 Immediate Attention conditions, of which six (7 percent) were not resolved within 30 days. They took 38 days to 63 days to resolve.

Finally, the Staten Island audit found 11 work orders that could easily have been classified as hazards demanding repair within 30 days but were not. Some of these work orders took over 100 days to resolve. (See table below)

Staten Island Potential Immediate Attention Hazards with Longest Wait Times for Repair

Hazard	Playground	Date Reported	Date Repaired	Days Elapsed
I.S. 2 safety fences missing from bottom of backstop	Midland Field	6/14/2011	8/15/2011	62
Remove large hanging limbs in trees on Lincoln Avenue	Midland Playground	12/29/2011	5/21/2012	144

Check all shackles on top of swings, at least four are worn	Lopez Playground	9/11/2011	5/24/2012	257
Trip hazard due to protruding bollard	Midland Field	6/14/2011	5/3/2012	324
Fall Hazard. 6 inches wide, 1.5 feet deep, 100 feet long	Naples Playground	5/25/2011	5/17/2012	358

The five audits are available for download here:

<http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/bureaus/audit/yearlyview.asp>

Background:

In March 2012, Comptroller Liu audited the Parks Department’s inspection process and found that, while inspectors were performing inspections in accordance with standards in many cases, the agency failed to fix hazards that its own inspectors flagged for attention. A press release announcing the March 2012 findings is available here:

http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/press/2012_releases/pr12-03-022.shtm

The latest audits more closely examined the maintenance and repairs of playgrounds and determined if problems identified in the prior audit were limited or a systemic problem.

*Visit www.comptroller.nyc.gov for the latest news, events, and initiatives.
Follow Comptroller Liu on [Twitter](#). To receive Twitter updates via text message, text “follow johnliu” to 40404. View the latest Comptroller’s office videos on [YouTube](#).*

###