



New York City Comptroller
Scott M. Stringer

NEWS

PRESS RELEASE

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COMPTROLLER STRINGER RELEASES CLAIMSTAT: NEW DATA-DRIVEN ANALYSIS OF LEGAL CLAIMS TO HELP SAVE TAXPAYER DOLLARS AND MAKE THE CITY SAFER

Early Warning System to Identify Trouble Spots Before They Become Costly

(New York, NY) – New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer today unveiled the first findings of [ClaimStat](#), a data-driven tool designed to drive down the cost of settlements and judgments by empowering City agencies to reduce claims through changes in training or resource delivery. Much like the New York City Police Department’s award-winning CompStat approach to fighting crime, ClaimStat reports will identify patterns in claims made against the City of New York to highlight both troubling trends and best practices.

“By taking a closer look at the thousands of legal claims made against New York every year, ClaimStat will serve as an early warning system to help agencies improve services and make our City safer,” Comptroller Stringer said. “ClaimStat is a new, data-driven tool that will help to identify costly trouble areas before they become multi-million dollar cases.”

ClaimStat is a first of its kind initiative in New York City to drill down on the thousands of claims that are first reported to the Comptroller’s Bureau of Law and Adjustment (BLA). BLA has the authority to investigate and negotiate settlements with respect to all claims filed against the City. Through ClaimStat, BLA will analyze claims to identify those which lead to costly settlements and judgments against the City. The Comptroller will publish these findings on a periodic basis and will work with City agencies and the Law Department to identify potential solutions.

Released today, this is the first in a series of ClaimStat reports that analyzes certain types of claims filed against the New York City Police Department, Department of Parks and Recreation, Health and Hospitals Corporation, Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Sanitation.

The report found several patterns within the agencies examined, including:

- **New York City Police Department:** There were over 9,500 claims filed and over \$137.2 million in judgment and settlement costs against the Police Department in FY13, the highest of any City agency. Precinct-level analyses reveals that certain precincts in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn have had far more personal injury claims filed against their officers than precincts in other parts of the City, even when adjusting for the crime rate in those precincts.
- **Department of Parks and Recreation:** Following a sharp reduction in the budget for tree pruning in FY10, there was a spike in tree-related claims, including several that led to multi-million dollar settlements. One settlement cost more than twice the Parks Department's annual budget for street tree pruning contracts for FY10–12. After the City Council's restoration of tree pruning funding in FY13, claims dropped.
- **Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC):** HHC has taken a proactive approach to reducing claims over the past decade, helping to drive down total claims against the agency by 18 percent since 2001. However, a hospital-by-hospital breakdown of claims shows some facilities have fared more poorly than others in recent years. For instance, Woodhull Hospital and Kings County Hospital showed marked increases in claims in FY13, while Jacobi/Bronx Municipal, Harlem and Lincoln Hospitals all experienced declines in claims activity.
- **Department of Environmental Protection (DEP):** Severe weather in recent years has revealed the disproportionate effect of flooding on certain areas of the City, including coastal areas of Brooklyn and Staten Island, that account for nearly 40 percent of all sewer-related claims in the City. The concentration of sewage overflow claims in certain communities such as Canarsie in Brooklyn and Mid Island in Staten Island gives DEP important guidance about how to allocate resources for infrastructure upgrades.
- **Department of Sanitation (DOS):** Sanitation is one of many agencies with a considerable fleet of city vehicles that lead to claims costs. While one might presume that claims against DOS trucks would occur most often along the narrow streets of Manhattan, an analysis of claims shows in fact they are concentrated more often along the winding, irregular streets of Staten Island and Flushing and College Point, Queens.

In FY95, the City paid \$246 million in judgments and claims costs related to tort claims. Twenty years later, the City set aside \$674 million for all legal judgments and claims costs in the FY15 Executive Budget, and those costs are projected to rise to \$782 million by FY18. The projected cost of legal judgments and claims now equals roughly \$80 per resident, or more than the City is projected to spend in FY15 on the Parks Department, the Department of Aging, and the New York Public Library combined.

Evidence of the efficacy of this type of examination is abundant. In Portland, Oregon, a similar data-driven approach to legal claims identified problematic patterns of excessive force in policing that were virtually eliminated after re-training. Likewise, in Los Angeles, a special counsel for the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department identified two precincts that were disproportionately represented

in claims filed. Following a review of tactics, claims costs dropped \$30 million in the first five years of the special counsel's tenure.

“ClaimStat will provide City agencies with the tools they need to improve their risk management practices. In the coming months, we'll be examining different agencies and tracking the trends at those agencies we examined in this report. As Comptroller, I will continue to find ways to improve governmental practices while making this City safer and more cost efficient,” Comptroller Stringer said.

To view the full report and interactive maps, please click [here](#)

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