



New York City Comptroller
Scott M. Stringer

NEWS

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STRINGER AUDIT REVEALS CITY FAILURE TO SET GOALS FOR REDUCING GREENHOUSE EMISSIONS IN MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS

Inadequate data from Department of Citywide Administrative Services undermine City's efforts to meet greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets

(New York, NY) - The Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) has failed to set goals for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in municipal buildings and is not properly tracking the City's efforts to conserve energy in City buildings, according to a new [audit](#) by New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer.

"Climate change is a very real threat, and New York City has set ambitious goals for cutting emissions and greening our buildings," Comptroller Stringer said. "But by failing to set and meet its own standards, or consistently track greenhouse gas reductions in City buildings, DCAS has become a poster child for ineffectiveness, rather than a role model for sustainability. Good data leads to good policy, and right now the City is far from achieving that standard."

In 2007, Mayor Bloomberg announced, *PlaNYC: A Greener, Greater New York*, a citywide initiative to develop a more sustainable New York City. The initiative included a plan to save energy and reduce GHG emissions of City buildings by 30 percent of 2006 levels by the year 2017.

Currently, 75 percent of New York City's GHG emissions come from buildings. DCAS, which manages more than 4,000 municipal buildings, is responsible for ensuring that municipal buildings meet the City's goal by accurately tracking energy use, benchmarking performance metrics, and spearheading building retrofits for

improved efficiency.

Auditors examined energy data for all municipal buildings subject to DCAS's energy use reporting between January 2010 and December 2014. The audit found that DCAS did not implement the City's GHG emissions-reduction goals and measures by failing to translate these into agency-level goals. The audit found that City buildings had achieved a 16 percent reduction in GHG emissions from the 2006 baseline, and an average annual reduction rate of 2.3 percent. If the City continues on that course, it will fail to meet its 30 percent goal.

Among key findings, the audit revealed:

- Failure to Set and Monitor Progress toward Goals: DCAS failed to develop a set of agency-level GHG emissions reduction goals in order to implement the ones established in PlaNYC. Additionally, DCAS did not track its own progress in cutting GHG emissions in City-owned buildings.
- Improper Data Reporting: In 2013, instead of providing actual measurements of annual cost savings and GHG emissions reductions, DCAS used projections made by consultants. Those projections changed dramatically over time: in 2013, DCAS claimed that GHG emissions in City-owned buildings for FY 2012 had been reduced by 3,325 metric tons; however, later in 2014, the Agency changed its estimate of GHG emissions savings for FY 2012 to 7,021 metric tons, doubling their achievement, at least on paper.
- Insufficient Data Reporting: The Newtown Creek Water Pollution Control Plant listed 30 buildings as part of its campus. In spite of the fact that the size of the buildings varied between 24,000 and 1.3 million square feet, DCAS reported identical energy performance for each building on campus, rather than providing a building-by-building breakdown of emissions. The audit found that this pattern was repeated at building campuses throughout the city.
- Incomplete Plan for Retrofitting City Buildings: DCAS failed to:
 - Submit a complete compliance schedule for performing energy audits and retrofitting 798 City buildings to be more energy efficient.
 - Establish a formal methodology for prioritizing buildings to undergo energy audits and retrofitting for energy efficiency.

“The City should be doing everything in its power to set consistent goals for every municipal building, track its progress, and follow through on recommendations,” Comptroller Stringer said. “Reducing GHG emissions is a key part of our strategy to protect the environment and DCAS needs to become part of the solution, not part of the problem.”

Auditors made 10 recommendations to DCAS, including:

- Establishing in-house GHG emission goals, in consultation with the Mayor's Office of Sustainability;
- Documenting how it will track in-house GHG emission reductions;
- Showing how the data it provides to the City is computed;
- Verifying its building inventory and ensuring that those buildings, including campuses with shared energy meters, are benchmarked for energy audits and that data is accurately measured and recorded; and
- Creating written procedures on how to prioritize which buildings will undergo energy audits.

DCAS generally disagreed with the audit findings. However, the agency agreed with two recommendations, claimed it had already implemented five, and disagreed with three.

This April, Mayor de Blasio announced his administration's plan for a sustainable City, *OneNYC*, which aims to reduce overall GHG emissions in New York City by 80 percent of the 2005 levels by the year 2050. Within this initiative is the *One City: Built to Last* plan, which calls for municipal buildings to reduce GHG emissions by 35 percent of 2005 levels by the year 2025. Even with these new targets, at the current rate, municipal buildings are not on track to meet these goals.

To date, according to the DCAS website, the Administration has distributed \$140 million to fifteen City agencies for energy efficiency initiatives in over 400 buildings. However, since DCAS does not provide reliable agency-level energy use metrics to the Mayor's Office of Sustainability, the City is unable to establish performance metrics as a basis for funding agencies for retrofitting and other energy reduction projects.

"If we're going to make New York a truly sustainable City, sloppy and imprecise information will not do," the Comptroller added. "DCAS must get its house in order – now – so we can get down to the business of conserving energy, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and fighting the worst effects of climate change."

To read the complete audit, click [here](#).