



New York City Comptroller  
John C. Liu

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Sharon Lee, (212) 669-3747

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**AEDs OUT OF SYNCH WITH PUBLIC HEALTH LAW**  
*Parks Department to Better Provide Emergency Life-Saving Devices*

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NEW YORK, NY – The New York City Parks Department had inadequate oversight, planning and maintenance of life-saving automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in public places, according to an audit completed by Comptroller John C. Liu. The audit uncovered the Parks Department did not fully comply with a five-year old public safety law (Local Law 20 of 2005) that mandated the placement of AEDs in public places where they would be accessible and available in emergencies.

“Hindsight is always 20/20, but preparing for an emergency takes consistency and organization,” Comptroller Liu said. “Emergency devices like AEDs can be the deciding factor in split-second life or death scenarios. To prevent worst case scenarios, it is essential that Parks ensure this critical equipment is in top form, and that the people who operate them are able to rapidly respond. It is encouraging that Parks is willing to do the work to ensure they meet the Local Law 20 mandate.”

City Council Minority Leader Councilmember James Oddo, author and prime sponsor of Local Law 20, said, “I and my colleagues in the City Council fought for many years to pass a law that, if properly implemented, could save the lives of New Yorkers who suffer sudden cardiac arrest in a public place. The leadership of the Parks Department must demonstrate the same commitment to public safety. In the year 2010, AEDs are not some far out technology. Training personnel to use them is not onerous and neither is conducting regular maintenance. It’s not a matter of a technological divide, but simply a matter of commitment.”

Out-of-hospital sudden cardiac arrests are responsible for an estimated 160,000 deaths a year nationally. Local Law 20 requires personnel be properly trained to use an AED and that devices are registered with the Regional Emergency Medical Services Council of New York City (REMSCO) before use by non-health care professionals.

Additional requirements include: implementation of Site-Specific Response Plans; maintenance and testing; adequate signage and that a first responder be present during the facility’s operating hours.

The audit examined 12 randomly-selected recreation centers operated by the Parks Department: Hunt’s Point and St. Mary’s Recreation Centers in the Bronx; Brownsville and Red Hook Recreation Centers in Brooklyn; Alfred E. Smith, Asser Levy, Jackie Robinson and North Meadow Recreation Centers in Manhattan; Lost Battalion Hall and Sorrentino Recreation Centers in Queens; George M. Cromwell and Greenbelt Recreation Centers in Staten Island.

The audit found that the Parks Department went above the legally required mandate and installed AEDs in additional parks and recreation sites. However, trained first responders were not always present during the recreation centers' operating hours, and the office noted that the installed AEDs were not regularly inspected to ensure they were in working order.

Comptroller Liu credited Deputy Comptroller for Audit H. Tina Kim and her team in the Bureau of Audit for presenting the findings and recommendations. The full audit report is available at [www.comptroller.nyc.gov/bureaus/audit/audits\\_2010/07-14-10\\_MD10-072A.shtm](http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/bureaus/audit/audits_2010/07-14-10_MD10-072A.shtm).

Chief among the findings during the period of the audit:

- **RESPONSE PLANS UNAVAILABLE OR INCOMPLETE:** Required Site-Specific Response Plans were either unavailable or incomplete at all 12 sampled sites. Response Plans have all the information required at each facility with an AED, including a list of trained responders, procedures to follow in notifying trained responders of the emergency and how the trained responder(s) would be dispatched to the site of the medical emergency. Without these Plans, there is limited assurance that personnel will know what steps to take in the event of a medical emergency, who the trained first responders are, and how to contact them.
- **INADEQUATE OVERSIGHT INSPECTIONS:** The oversight inspections that were performed were not always complete nor covered all of the law's key requirements. In addition, not all of the recreation centers were inspected as required and there was no evidence of follow-up of deficiencies identified during oversight inspections.
- **EXPIRED OR LACKING AED SUPPLIES:** Eight of the 12 sites (67 percent) sampled did not have all required AED supplies and/or had expired supplies, i.e. spare batteries, child pads and sterile gloves. Parks Department records showed that previous internal inspections revealed five centers had inoperable AEDs at times because of low or expired batteries or expired defibrillation pads.
- **INADEQUATE COVERAGE BY TRAINED FIRST RESPONDERS:** New York State Public Health Law states that no person may operate an AED unless that person has successfully completed a training course in the operation of an AED. However, there was no assurance that a trained first responder was always present during the recreation centers' operating hours.
- **LACKING OR INADEQUATE AED SIGNAGE:** Eleven of the 12 sites (92 percent) sampled did not have all required wall signs or the signs did not include all the required emergency contact information.
- **AEDS NOT PROPERLY REGISTERED:** Parks Department did not register all of its AED devices with REMSCO as required. AEDs must be registered with REMSCO with a contact person, number of trained personnel and number of AEDs at each site. REMSCO then provides this information to professional emergency responders such as the Fire Department for use if needed in a medical emergency.

Based on the audit's findings, Comptroller Liu issued a set of recommendations to the Parks Department to improve compliance with Local Law 20 and enhance the utility of AEDs as potential life-saving resources in public places, including:

- Ensure that Site-Specific Response Plans are prepared for each site with AEDs.
- Conduct daily inspections of AED status indicators to verify that the units are operational.
- Perform monthly inspections of AED supplies.
- Ensure that a trained first responder is on site during all hours of operation at each facility.

- Ensure that all required AED signage is placed in its facilities and that all required information is included on the signs, such as a telephone number to contact an on-site trained first responder.
- Ensure all AEDs are properly registered with REMSCO.

In response to the audit, the Parks Department stated they have taken the following additional actions:

- Created and implemented Standard Operating Procedures, which cover all aspects of the Agency's AED program, including daily and monthly inspections, unannounced OMP inspection, training of staff, reporting requirements and replenishing supplies.
- Revised and expanded the AED inspection protocols and forms including a nine point step by step inspection procedure to ensure uniform daily inspections at all facilities with an AED, and to include manufacturer recommended methods, and ensure that the names of first responders are accurate.
- Updated Parks' FDNY certified Site Response Plans and Signage to indicate current Trained Responders and locations of AED units.
- Bolstered supplies at facilities.
- Established a new annual assessment protocol for the AED program.

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