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AUDIT: 38% OF HIGH PRIORITY FIRE HYDRANTS NOT REPAIRED ON TIME

NEW YORK, NY – The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is not fixing fire hydrants fast enough putting the public and firefighters at risk, according to an audit released today by New York City Comptroller John C. Liu.

Comptroller Liu said the problem is even bigger for hydrants designated as “High Priority,” meaning they are either located near a school, hospital, or senior citizens’ residence, or are the only fire hydrant on the block. The audit reviewed 149 high priority hydrant work orders and found that some of the fire hydrants were out of service anywhere from three months to more than one year.



DEP took over a year to repair this defective hydrant outside of P.S. 25 on Lafayette Avenue in the Bedford- Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn

For example, a fire hydrant at 116th Street and Liberty Avenue in Queens took 368 days to fix and a fire hydrant at 15 Little Clove Road in Staten Island waited 102 days to be repaired.

“New York City’s firefighters already have a dangerous job, and a malfunctioning fire hydrant represents one less tool that our firefighters have to carry out their duty of protecting lives and property,” Comptroller Liu said. “Repairs to fire hydrants – especially the ones deemed ‘High Priority’ by the City’s Bravest – must be better prioritized and further accelerated.”

The DEP has a goal of 10 days to repair high priority fire hydrants. But 38 percent of the fire hydrants surveyed did not meet the 10-day goal.

DEP maintains and repairs the City’s 109,217 fire hydrants. In Fiscal Year 2009, the agency received complaints regarding 15 percent of fire hydrants. According to the audit, it took an average of 18 days to make repairs. The audit also found a wide discrepancy in repair time among the five boroughs. The DEP could not explain the discrepancy.

Average Time by Borough to Fix Broken Fire Hydrants, FY 2009		
Borough	# of Work Orders	Avg. # of Days to Resolve
Staten Island	1,310	33.4
Brooklyn	4,675	26.6
Bronx	2,726	19.5
Manhattan	4,514	10.3
Queens	3,208	10.1

The audit was initiated by former New York City Comptroller William C. Thompson. It was initiated to determine if the DEP made repairs to the City's fire hydrants in a timely manner.

Chief among the findings:

- Citywide, the DEP took an average 18.3 days to repair fire hydrants in FY 2009
- 2,314 fire hydrants were not fixed for more than one month
- 43 fire hydrants were not fixed for more than one year
- 81 fire hydrants for which work order were issued in FY 2009 were still not fixed as of April 21, 2010
- The DEP had no written standard of what an appropriate response time should be
- The DEP did not properly track repairs to fire hydrants

The recommendations made by Comptroller Liu to the DEP include:

- The DEP needs to improve its response to fixing broken fire hydrants, especially high priority hydrants
- The DEP needs to improve its tracking of repairing fire hydrants to better assess and resolve complaints that remain open for extended periods

The DEP agreed with six of the audit's eight findings. Comptroller Liu credited Deputy Comptroller for Audit H. Tina Kim and the Bureau of Audit for presenting the findings. The full report is available at <http://comptroller.nyc.gov/audits>.

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