

**November 26, 2002**

**Scammed Shoppers to get help under new program launched by  
Department of Consumer Affairs, Midtown BIDs and NYC & Company**

*New Initiative Will Expand Agency Services, Make it Easier for Visitors to  
File Complaints and Identify Problem Businesses*

With the holiday season expected to attract throngs of visitors to New York City, Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Gretchen Dykstra today announced a new partnership with three large midtown Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and NYC & Company to create consumer complaint centers for tourists. The new initiative will establish multiple centers that are open seven days a week and offer extended hours for visitors to seek assistance and file complaints.

The Times Square BID, NYC's Official Visitor Information Center (NYC & Company), the Grand Central Partnership and the 34th Street Partnership will now be able to accept and assess complaints and, in some cases, mediate disputes between consumers and local businesses.

"Public and private partnerships work and we are thrilled to be in Times Square to announce new help for tourists," said DCA Commissioner Gretchen Dykstra. "We hope that services won't be necessary but we know there are businesses, particularly some electronic stores, that target unsuspecting tourists. This initiative makes it easy for visitors to conveniently file complaints. It gives our partners the tools to be our eyes and ears - helping us to identify problem businesses and protect consumers."

DCA created palm cards, available at all partner locations as well as in hotels and businesses, listing the locations of complaint centers and tips for tourists shopping for electronics. There are more than 85 hotels and 75 electronic stores in the midtown business improvement districts.