



# City of New York

## OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

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COMPTROLLER



### IT Audit & Research

**Tina Kim**

Deputy Comptroller for Audit

Audit Report on the Maintenance and  
Repairs of the City's Playgrounds by the  
Department of Parks and Recreation

Staten Island Borough Office

7R13-067A

April 11, 2013

<http://comptroller.nyc.gov>



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
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John C. Liu  
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April 11, 2013

**To the Residents of the City of New York:**

My office has audited the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to determine the timeliness of maintenance and repairs of the City's public playgrounds in Staten Island. We audit entities such as DPR as a mean of ensuring that the City's public playgrounds are properly maintained and safe for children to use.

The Staten Island Borough Commissioner's office routinely cleans and maintains borough playgrounds. They completed approximately 93 percent of the work orders initiated during our audit scope period. In addition, 83 percent of the work orders issued and completed were completed within 30 days. The remaining 17 percent of work orders were completed beyond 30 days. Furthermore, of the 90 "Immediate Attention" (IA) reported to the Borough Office, six IAs (7 percent) were not resolved within the required 30 days. In fact, some took from 38 days to 63 days. We also found that Staten Island Borough district offices lack guidelines that specify the timeframes for the repair of non-IA conditions.

Based on the work order descriptions provided by DPR, we found that 11 work orders may have been classified as requiring IAs if the conditions had been identified by Parks Inspection Program (PIP) inspectors. These items were not completed in a timely manner. Additionally, the District offices are not effectively monitoring the status of open work orders and the information in Asset Management Property System (AMPS) is often not correct.


The timeliness of DPR's resolution of IA repairs, while not egregious, will be affected in the near term by the impact of Hurricane Sandy, resulting in the increased importance of prioritizing those items that represent IAs or hazardous conditions.

The audit contains six recommendations that, if implemented, should improve the conditions and safety of the Staten Island playgrounds.

The results of the audit have been discussed with DPR officials, and their comments have been considered in preparing this report. Their complete written response is attached to this report.

If you have any questions concerning this report, please e-mail my audit bureau at [audit@comptroller.nyc.gov](mailto:audit@comptroller.nyc.gov).

Sincerely,



John C. Liu

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# **THE CITY OF NEW YORK OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER IT AUDIT & RESEARCH**

## **Audit Report on the Maintenance and Repairs of the City's Playgrounds by the Department of Parks and Recreation**

### **Staten Island Borough Office**

**7R13-067A**

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## **AUDIT REPORT IN BRIEF**

The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) maintains a municipal parks system of more than 29,000 acres throughout the City, including more than 1,700 parks, 2,500 Greenstreet sites, and over 1,000 playgrounds. One of DPR's principal missions is to manage and care for all playgrounds and playground fixtures in the City.

To provide local parks services, a Borough Commissioner is appointed for each of the City's five boroughs. Each Borough commissioner oversees the management and operations of agency programs and is responsible for the administrative management of parks and green spaces within the borough, including the maintenance and repair of City parks and playgrounds. A Chief of Operations in each borough oversees the daily operations of all DPR facilities within the borough and ensures that playgrounds are properly maintained.

### **Audit Findings and Conclusion**

The Staten Island Borough Commissioner's office routinely cleans and maintains borough playgrounds. They completed approximately 93 percent of the work orders initiated during our audit scope period. In addition, 83 percent of the work orders issued and completed were completed within 30 days. The remaining 17 percent of work orders were completed beyond 30 days. Furthermore, of the 90 "Immediate Attention" (IA) conditions reported to the Borough Office, six IAs (7 percent) were not resolved within the required 30 days. In fact, some took from 38 days to 63 days. We also found that Staten Island Borough district offices lack guidelines that specify the timeframes for the repair of non-IA conditions.

Based on work order descriptions provided by DPR, we found that 11 work orders may have been classified as requiring IA if the conditions had been identified by Parks Inspection Program (PIP) inspectors. These items were not resolved in a timely manner. Additionally, the District

offices are not effectively monitoring the status of open work orders and the information in the “Asset Management Property System” (AMPS)<sup>1</sup> is often not correct.

The timeliness of DPR’s resolution of IA repairs, while not egregious, will be affected in the near term by the impact of Hurricane Sandy, resulting in the increased importance of prioritizing those items that represent IAs or hazardous conditions.

## **Audit Recommendations**

This report makes a total of six recommendations, including that DPR should:

- Implement standards to ensure that supervisory inspections adhere to PIP standards for remediating IA conditions.
- Remediate all work orders with hazardous conditions within 30 days.
- Ensure that IA items are resolved within 30 days.
- Categorize conditions identified by District Supervisors using the same criteria used by the PIP inspectors.
- Regularly monitor the status of open work orders and update them in AMPS.
- Follow up on work order requests to ensure they have been processed.

## **Agency Response**

In their response, DPR officials contended that the work orders were prioritized and completed in a timely manner and disagreed with “several findings in the reports regarding how Parks manages its maintenance program and its work orders.” However, DPR officials agreed that the reports “raised some important issues regarding the maintenance and repair of the City’s playgrounds which we appreciate” and “...We agree that a formal review process for all open work orders would ensure that all requests are managed appropriately.”

The agency also said, “In addition, upon careful review of Parks operations and the recommendations in the report, we believe that current and action underway already address the issues raised.”

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<sup>1</sup> DPR uses AMPS to organize its work orders, daily cleaning work, and inventory related to the general maintenance of parks.

# INTRODUCTION

## Background

The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) maintains a municipal parks system of more than 29,000 acres throughout the City, including more than 1,700 parks, 2,500 Greenstreet<sup>2</sup> sites, and over 1,000 playgrounds. One of DPR's principal missions is to manage and care for all playgrounds and playground fixtures in the City.

To provide local parks services, a Borough Commissioner is appointed for each of the City's five boroughs. Each Borough commissioner oversees the management and operations of agency programs and is responsible for the administrative management of parks and green spaces within the borough, including the maintenance and repair of City parks and playgrounds. A Chief of Operations in each borough oversees the daily operations of all DPR facilities within the borough and ensures that playgrounds are properly maintained.

Borough parks are geographically organized into districts.<sup>3</sup> Each district office is managed by a DPR supervisor who inspects the playgrounds in each district park at least once every two weeks. Supervisors are responsible for routine cleaning and maintenance of the playgrounds. The frequency of supervisor inspections and maintenance scheduling is dependent on the level of use for each playground. If a supervisory inspection found issues with cleanliness or maintenance, a supervisor can either correct the issues (if possible) during the inspection or initiate a work request to carry out corrective work. Work order requests are recorded in a computerized data management program called AMPS.

In addition to supervisory inspections, DPR's Office of Operations and Management Planning (OMP) oversees an inspection program known as the "Parks Inspection Program"<sup>4</sup> (PIP). Depending on the severity of the condition cited by the PIP inspector, a serious condition is identified as requiring "Immediate Attention" (IA), which must be remediated within four weeks (i.e., 30 days). Conditions that are classified by PIP inspectors as IAs are considered hazardous and are forwarded to the Borough's officials for remediation. Subsequently, District offices will be notified and asked to assess the conditions. As a follow-up, district supervisors are required to re-inspect the playground's conditions that were cited by PIP inspectors.

According to AMPS, district offices in Staten Island issued 1,301 playground-related work orders during our 12-month audit scope period. (See Table I)

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<sup>2</sup> Launched in 1996, the Greenstreets program began as a partnership between DPR and the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT). The program was created to change unused road areas into green spaces that beautify neighborhoods, improve air quality, reduce air temperatures, and calm traffic. Since its beginning, over 2,500 Greenstreets have been built citywide.

<sup>3</sup> The Districts are closely correlated to the community districts in the Borough. Each District varies in size and may have more than one playground. The Borough of Staten Island is divided into three Districts and has a total of 56 playgrounds.

<sup>4</sup> The Parks Inspection Program (PIP) is a comprehensive, outcome-based performance measurement system that generates frequent, random, and detailed inspections of parks and playgrounds. This program provides DPR management, elected officials, and the public with a broad indicator of the condition of City parks. The program has been designed to reflect conditions encountered by the public when using DPR facilities.



**Table I**

Work Order Status as of May 29, 2012

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of Work Orders</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Completed	1,206	93%
Open	79	6%
Work Request	16	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,301</b>	<b>100%</b>

The Comptroller’s Office previously conducted an audit to evaluate the PIP’s effectiveness in monitoring public playgrounds in Staten Island, entitled “Audit Report on the Effectiveness of the Department of Parks and Recreation’s Parks Inspection Program—Staten Island Playgrounds Report” (7R12-099A, issued March 8, 2012). That audit found that OMP officials inspect the playgrounds as required and forward the results of the inspections to DPR officials and borough officials, including the Borough Commissioner and Chief of Operations, for review and correction of deficient conditions. The audit also identified instances where the Staten Island Chief of Operations did not correct reportable conditions in a timely manner.

## **Objective**

The objective of this audit is to determine the timeliness of maintenance and repairs of the City’s public playgrounds by the Staten Island Borough Commissioner’s Office.

## **Scope and Methodology Statement**

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. This audit was conducted in accordance with the audit responsibilities of the City Comptroller as set forth in Chapter 5, §93 of the New York City Charter.

The scope of this audit was from April 1, 2011, through March 2012. Please refer to the Detailed Scope and Methodology at the end of this report for the specific procedures and tests that were conducted.

## **Discussion of Audit Results**

The matters covered in this report were discussed with DPR officials during and at the conclusion of this audit. This preliminary draft report was sent to DPR officials and was discussed at an exit conference held on January 3, 2013. On January 11, 2013, we submitted a draft report to DPR officials with a request for comments. We received a written response on January 29, 2013. In their response, DPR officials contended that the work orders were prioritized and completed in a timely manner and disagreed with “several findings in the reports regarding how Parks manages its maintenance program and its work orders.” However, DPR

officials agreed that the reports “raised some important issues regarding the maintenance and repair of the City’s playgrounds which we appreciate” and “...We agree that a formal review process for all open work orders would ensure that all requests are managed appropriately.”

The agency also said, “In addition, upon careful review of Parks operations and the recommendations in the report, we believe that current and action underway already address the issues raised.”

The full text of the DPR response is included as an addendum to this final report.



## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Staten Island Borough Commissioner's office routinely cleans and maintains borough playgrounds. They completed approximately 93 percent of the work orders initiated during our audit scope period. In addition, 83 percent of the work orders issued and completed were completed within 30 days. The remaining 17 percent of work orders were completed beyond 30 days. Furthermore, of the 90 IAs reported to the Borough Office, six IAs (7 percent) were not resolved within the required 30 days. In fact, some took from 38 days to 63 days. We also found that Staten Island Borough district offices lack guidelines that specify the timeframes for the repair of non-IA conditions.

Based on work order descriptions provided by DPR, we found that 11 work orders may have been classified as requiring IA if the conditions had been identified by PIP inspectors. These items were not resolved in a timely manner. Additionally, the District offices are not effectively monitoring the status of open work orders and the information in AMPS is often not correct.

The timeliness of DPR's resolution of IA repairs, while not egregious, will be affected in the near term by the impact of Hurricane Sandy, resulting in the increased importance of prioritizing those items that represent IAs or hazardous conditions.

These matters are discussed below.

### Repairs Not Carried Out on a Timely Basis

#### Timeliness of Completion of Work Orders

Unlike the IA work orders, there is no required timeframe for completion of work orders initiated by the District Office. According to information contained in AMPS, of the work orders issued from April 2011 to March 2012 in Staten Island, 1,206 were completed as of May 29, 2012. The work orders were for routine maintenance items, repairs to play equipment and structures, and forestry. Of the 1,206 work orders that were completed, 1,101 (83 percent) were completed within 30 days, while the remainder – 205 work orders (17 percent) – were completed beyond 30 days. In those cases, work was completed between 31 and 398 days after the work order was initiated. (See Table II)

**Table II**

Timeliness of Completing Work Orders Initiated by the Staten Island District Offices

Days Resolved	Work Orders	Percentage
Within 30 days	1,001	83%
Within 60 days	106	9%
Within 90 days	37	3%
Over 90 days	62	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,206</b>	<b>100%</b>

Of the 205 work orders not resolved within 30 days, we identified 11 work orders pertaining to conditions that were similar to the description of IAs in the “Parks Inspection Program Standards.”<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, we believe that these conditions may have been classified by PIP inspectors as IAs because of their potential to pose safety hazards to the public. Some of the conditions reported in the 11 work orders included trip hazards, repairing safety surfaces, and removing large dead limbs. Although supervisory inspections are not required to adhere to the same standards as PIP inspections, conditions that are similar to IAs and that pose a potential hazard to the public should be resolved within a timely basis, such as the 30-day requirement set by PIP.

## Recommendations

DPR should:

1. Implement standards to ensure that supervisory inspections adhere to PIP standards for remediating IA conditions.

**DPR Response:** “IAs are only issued by specially trained and skilled Parks Inspectors. Parks will continue to treat conditions discovered by M&O field staff supervision with the same gravity as those found by PIP Inspectors. .... Supervisors will also continue to identify conditions using the same language and standards as per the PIP program.”

2. Remediate all work orders with hazardous conditions within 30 days.

**DPR Response:** “Parks has a system in place to manage and monitor IAs, which ensures that all IAs are properly resolved within a specified timeframe. However, Parks continuously close out any work orders within a reasonable time frame. If a work order is considered hazardous, Parks will ensure the work is done as soon as possible, and minimally, the area will be made safe for the general public.”

**Auditor Comment:** As acknowledged in our report, we understand supervisory inspections are not required to adhere to the same standards as PIP inspections; however, we are pleased that DPR’s supervisors use the same language and standards as per the PIP program to identify conditions in the playgrounds. Accordingly, we expect the work orders with descriptions of hazardous conditions to be resolved within the stipulated timeframe in PIP standards.

## Timeliness of IA Repairs

District offices are responsible for ensuring that IA conditions are properly addressed and resolved. Conditions that are classified by PIP inspectors as IAs are forwarded to the Borough’s Chief of Operations and District offices for assessment and resolution. IA conditions are required to be resolved within two to four weeks. IAs are tracked by OMP and recorded in OMP’s own system as of the date of the inspection and IAs are “closed out” or deemed resolved by OMP when proof of repair and completion is submitted by the appropriate District office.

PIP inspectors in Staten Island identified 90 IA conditions between April 2011 and March 2012.

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix I for the list of 11 work orders.

Of the 90 conditions, six (7 percent) were not resolved within 30 days.<sup>6</sup> Some took as long as 38 to 63 days to resolve. Conditions classified as IA should be resolved in a timely manner to ensure that potentially hazardous conditions do not jeopardize public safety.

## Recommendation

DPR should:

3. Ensure that IAs items are resolved within 30 days.

**DPR Response:** “Parks policy is to resolve all IAs within 30 days and will continue to monitor and follow-up on all conditions that are hazardous. In order to ensure IAs are resolved promptly, we currently have the Daily Immediate Attention (“DIA”) System that manages and monitors the number of IAs as well as the resolution of these hazards...”

**Auditor Comment:** We are aware of the “DIA” System and our finding was based on the data extracted from the system. DPR officials claimed that the alleged delays were caused by various factors, but did not have sufficient documentation to support this. We urge DPR officials to document delays and inform OMP of any delays in remediation and resolve IAs promptly.

## Inconsistent Categorizing of Repairs

As previously mentioned, DPR’s Office of Operations and Management Planning (OMP) oversees an inspection program known as the “Parks Inspection Program” (PIP). The results of these inspections are forwarded to the Borough Commissioner and the Chief of Operations. Conditions that are classified by PIP inspectors as IAs are considered hazardous and must be remediated within four weeks (i.e., 30 days).

Of the 79 unresolved work orders listed in AMPS, we found six work orders generated by the District supervisors during their routine inspections that likely may have been classified as IAs if found by OPM during an inspection. However, these serious conditions are not classified as IAs because District supervisors do not use the “Parks Inspection Program Standards” to classify conditions. All six cases remained open in AMPS for periods ranging from 66 days to 297 days as of May 29, 2012<sup>7</sup>.

On December 20, 2012, DPR officials provided documentation for these six work orders. Because the status of these work orders was not entered into AMPS, they were reported open as of May 29, 2012. Based on the documentation, we found that of the six cases, five were remediated prior to May 29, 2012, and the remaining one was completed and closed out in AMPS after May 29, 2012.

## Recommendation

DPR should:

4. Categorize conditions identified by District Supervisors using the same criteria used by the PIP inspectors.

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix II for the list of IAs over 30 days.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix III for the list of six work orders.

**DPR Response:** “A new mobile handheld inspection module is being implemented in AMPS to enhance inspections for M&O. This will allow Parks supervisors to conduct field inspections on their mobile hand held devices. Further, they will use standards to conduct these inspections from the PIP manual. Supervisors will also continue to identify conditions using the same language and standards as per the PIP program.”

## Work Orders Not Completed

According to information contained in AMPS, District offices in Staten Island issued 1,301 work orders within a 12-month period (April 2011 to March 2012). Of these, 79 work orders (6 percent) were listed as open as of May 29, 2012. These 79 work orders range from minor maintenance items (e.g., historical sign) to potentially hazardous conditions (e.g., replace damaged swing or splintered or jagged bench). (See Table III)

**Table III**

Outstanding Work Orders as of May 29, 2012

Days Open	Work Orders	Percentage
<b>301 &amp; up</b>	28	36%
<b>201-300 days</b>	20	25%
<b>100-200 days</b>	20	25%
<b>Under 100 days</b>	11	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Open Work Orders Not Tracked

As of May 29, 2012, 79 work orders were open between 60 and 403 days. We requested additional information for all 79 unresolved work orders and found that 29 have been resolved. Additionally, we identified 16 work order requests that were initiated between April 2011 and March 2012, but these were neither processed as work orders nor cancelled. Some were outstanding for more than a year.

## Recommendations

DPR should:

5. Regularly monitor the status of open work orders and update them in AMPS.

**DPR Response:** “As the auditors are aware, in a number of instances work order conditions were corrected but their status in AMPS was not updated. As a result, District Supervision will be advised to assess the state of open work on a monthly basis, and make any required updates. Furthermore, the Borough Supervisor of Trades and/or the Deputy Chief of Operations prioritize repair work orders, depending on the nature of the work order, the hazardous nature of the condition, and the scheduling of repair work.”

6. Follow up on work order requests to ensure they have been processed.

**DPR Response:** “District Supervision will be advised to assess the state of work that needs to be done on a monthly basis, and follow up with the appropriate parties in order to complete the work orders.”

## Other Issue

As previously noted, DPR uses AMPS to organize work orders and to record supply inventories and the results of daily cleaning activities. Beginning June 2009<sup>8</sup>, AMPS replaced individual borough databases with a single unified system. Our review of the summary work order report generated by AMPS found data entry errors that were not corrected by AMPS in the other boroughs. However, of the 1,206 work orders that were reported as completed, we found no inaccurate dates nor did we find individual completion dates on the report generated by AMPS that were earlier than the work order issuance dates.

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<sup>8</sup> The system was rolled out by borough starting with Queens in June 2009, Manhattan in April 2010, Staten Island in September 2010, the Bronx in November 2010, and Brooklyn in February 2011.

## DETAILED SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. This audit was conducted in accordance with the audit responsibilities of the City Comptroller as set forth in Chapter 5, §93, of the New York City Charter.

The scope period of this audit was April 2011 through March 2012. To meet our objectives, we obtained and reviewed the 2004 edition of DPR's "Field Operations Book."

To gain an understanding of the Borough operation, we interviewed DPR's officials from different boroughs and obtained written documentation specific to the Borough's operation.

To determine if the playgrounds are routinely cleaned, we requested one month of bi-weekly work schedules of the cleaning crew for March 2012 and a daily task routing slip that shows lists of playgrounds cleaned in March 2012 for each of the District Offices in Staten Island.

To determine if the work orders were completed in a timely manner, we requested a summary report for all work orders issued from April 2011 to March 2012, and we analyzed the time lapse for these work orders based on the issuance date and the audit fieldwork procedure completion date of May 29, 2012. For those work orders that took longer than 30 days to be completed, we reviewed the descriptions of the repairs and determined whether some of these conditions should have been corrected earlier. To determine whether there are adequate justifications for the work orders that are still open, we requested status and additional information for those work orders from the Borough office for review.

To determine whether the IAs were resolved in a timely manner, we reviewed the Parks Inspection Program (PIP) IA summary report for Staten Island from April 2011 to March 2012, and analyzed the time lapse of the IAs based on when the IAs were issued and resolved.



**Possible Immediate Attention Conditions as of May 29, 2012**

(Descriptions are unaltered from DPR's records and are therefore uncorrected for grammatical and spelling errors)\*

	<b>Prop/Fac/Feat Description</b>	<b>Work Order</b>	<b>Description*</b>	<b>Date Created</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>	<b># Days Elapsed</b>
1	Terrace Playground	522759	fill in large cracks in main basketball court area	8/25/2011	9/30/2011	36
2	Double Nickle Playground	550942	please repair prior repairs to S/S, existing repairs are loose and coming out	12/8/2011	1/17/2012	40
3	Toad Hall Playground	586161	Trip Hazard at ent gate	3/24/2012	5/3/2012	40
4	Dongan Playground	548940	Splintered/Jagged near dongan hills ave	12/2/2011	1/12/2012	41
5	Prescott Playground	550234	Pls fix safety surface in J swing area. It is completely worn.	12/7/2011	1/17/2012	41
6	Dugan Playground	545967	please repair ripped S/S tile in "J" swing area, corner ripped poss ankle turn	11/21/2011	1/17/2012	57
7	Midland Field	479871	I.S.2 Safety fences missing from bottom of AF 1 backstop	6/14/2011	8/15/2011	62
8	Midland Playground	555784	pls remove large hanging limbs in trees on lincoln ave see caution tape	12/29/2011	5/21/2012	144
9	Lopez Playground	526878	checkk all shackels on top of swings at least 4 are worn*WAITING ON SHACKEL&apos;S	9/11/2011	5/24/2012	257
10	Midland Field	479795	Trip hazard due to protruding bollard along Bedford adj. to Laconia	6/14/2011	5/3/2012	324
11	Naples Playground	460565	Fall Hazard6in. wide 1 1/2 deep100ft long	5/25/2011	5/17/2012	358

## APPENDIX II

### Immediate Attentions that Required Over 30 Days to Resolve as April 9, 2012

(Hazards are unaltered from DPR's records and are therefore uncorrected for grammatical and spelling errors)\*

	Date	Site Name	Priority	Feature	Hazard*	Date Completed	# Days Elapsed
1	6/3/2011	MIDLAND FIELD	2	Paved Surfaces	Trip hazard due to	7/11/2011	38
2	1/19/2012	PRESCOTT PLGD	2	Paved Surfaces	Trip hazard due to	2/29/2012	41
3	11/14/2011	ARROCHAR PLGD	2	Trees	Dangling limb over	12/30/2011	46
4	11/14/2011	ARROCHAR PLGD	1	Trees	Large, dangling limb over	1/3/2012	50
5	6/3/2011	MIDLAND FIELD	2	Paved Surfaces	Ankle turn hazard(s) in active area due to	8/2/2011	60
6	5/10/2011	CLAWSON PLGD (PS 50)	2	Paved Surfaces	Ankle turn hazard(s) in active area due to	7/12/2011	63

### Inconsistent Categorization of Possible Immediate Attentions

(Descriptions are unaltered from DPR's records and are therefore uncorrected for grammatical and spelling errors)\*

	Prop/Fac/Feat Description	Work Order	Description*	Date Created	# Days Elapsed as of 5/29/12	Current Status as of 12/20/12
1	Toad Hall Playground	586154	Splintered/Jagged 2 v/r opp m/c/s	3/24/2012	66	Completed**
2	Dongan Playground	585022	Splintered/Jagged 4ft v/r slat adj mens room	3/21/2012	69	Completed**
3	Midland Playground	539280	P/E resecure loose bar on p/e coming in midland ave	10/26/2011	216	Completed**
4	Midland Playground	539277	ps38 pls replace damaged j-swing 2nd from lincoln ave	10/26/2011	216	Completed
5	Naples Playground	533079	Splintered/Jagged Worlds Fair bench	10/5/2011	237	Completed**
6	Lt . Lia Playground	517103	Custom job; replace splintered, rotted bench wood on one bench.	8/6/2011	297	Completed**

Note: (\*\*) Represents work orders completed prior to May 29, 2012.



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ADDENDUM  
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Parks & Recreation

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January 29, 2013

Ms. Tina Kim  
Deputy Comptroller for Audit  
The City of New York  
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1 Centre Street, New York, NY 10007

**Re: Audit Report on the Maintenance and Repairs of the City's Playgrounds by the Department of Parks and Recreation: the Bronx (7R13-068A); Brooklyn (7R13-066A); Manhattan (7R13-120A); Queens (7R12-142A); Staten Island (7R13-167A).**

Dear Deputy Comptroller Kim:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and respond to the above referenced Draft Audit Reports. The New York City Department of Parks & Recreation ("Parks") is pleased that the reports found that the Parks Maintenance & Operations Division ("M&O") resolved a vast number of complicated and diverse work orders generated. At the time the preliminary draft reports were issued for all boroughs, 87.9% of work orders issued for playgrounds were completed. As of January 24, 2013, that number has risen to 97.2%. The reports also raised some important issues regarding the maintenance and repair of the City's playgrounds, which we appreciate. However, we disagree with several findings in the reports regarding how Parks manages its maintenance program and its work orders.

Parks M&O organizes its work orders carefully and takes the necessary steps to ensure that they are resolved. All work orders are prioritized by considering factors such as the nature of the condition, the severity of the work order, the availability of material resources and skilled labor, and the weather conditions. This gives us the flexibility to address critical safety and functional issues as they emerge, while balancing seasonal maintenance requirements and valid requests that are of a lower priority. However, the reports still cited that Parks failed to properly complete some work orders within a timeframe that was arbitrarily created by the auditors. Parks does not understand why the report continues to reference a 30 day timeframe as a benchmark when we have clearly explained that the timeframe only applies to our Immediate Attention ("IAs") identified by our Parks Inspection Program ("PIP") Inspectors. We share the reports' sentiment that all work orders should be corrected as soon as possible and prioritized by importance, and believe that we have managed this important and complicated workload in a time-sensitive manner, particularly considering the magnitude of work orders generated **(22,194)** for the audit period and completed **(21,569)** as of January 24, 2013.

The reports do not acknowledge the complexity of the workload nor the decision-making processes and procedures taken to ensure that the most important or critical work orders are prioritized and completed in a timely fashion. Indeed, the wide variety of work orders may include the following: plumbing, sidewalk repair, safety surface, play equipment, forestry, fencing, paved surfaces, mason work, etc. Therefore, we disagree with the way in which the information is presented. We agree that a formal review process for all open work orders would ensure that all requests are managed appropriately. However, we strongly

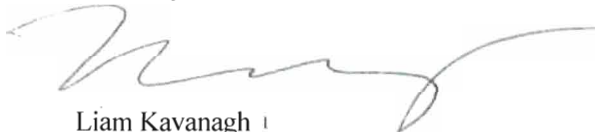
disagree with the finding that Parks did not resolve work orders in a timely manner. At the time the preliminary draft reports were issued for all boroughs, 88% of work orders were completed (18,600), and 87% of those completed work orders were closed out within 90-Days (16,099).

The reports also cited some work orders that are described by the auditors as hazardous conditions. Therefore, the reports contend that Parks should have treated these work orders as IAs, and resolved them within 30 days. As discussed with the audit staff, IAs are issued by OMP inspectors through PIP inspections, are tracked closely through the Daily Immediate Attention system and are expected to be closed within 30 days. We understand that many of the work orders may sound similar to IAs as written up by M&O staff, but the Borough Supervisor of Trades and/or the Deputy Chief of Operations make the determination of the severity of the work order, the hazardous nature of the condition, and the scheduling of repair work. They are familiar with both the Agency's safety and performance standards and prioritize work requests that rise to the level of an IA. However, Parks continues to issue work orders for conditions that need repair, fixes them as soon as possible, and closes them out in the Parks' Asset Management Parks System ("AMPS"). In addition, mobile handheld devices will be further integrated into our regular inspection process to allow M&O staff to issue work orders in the field and facilitate tracking of conditions reported.

Indeed, in FY12, 92 percent of playground safety surfaces and 92 percent of playground equipment were acceptable upon inspection. This underscores the fact that our well-planned procedures for timely addressing these issues are working.

We thank the Office of the Comptroller for your audit. In addition, upon careful review of Parks operations and the recommendation in the report, we believe that current and action underway already address the issues raised. Our responses to the report recommendations are attached.

Sincerely,



Liam Kavanagh  
First Deputy Commissioner

cc: Veronica M. White, Commissioner  
Robert Garafola, Deputy Commissioner for Management and Budget  
David Stark, Assistant Commissioner for Budget  
Frank D'Ercola, Deputy Chief Fiscal Officer  
David Cerron, Chief Accountant  
Jun Lee, Director, Operations and Management Planning  
Vincent Liguori, Director, Financial Audit

**Response to Recommendations for the Bronx (7R13-068A); Brooklyn (7R13-066A); Manhattan (7R13-120A); Queens (7R12-142A); Staten Island (7R13-167A).**

***Response to Section Recommendation 1: Implement standards to ensure that supervisory inspections adhere to PIP standards for remediating IA conditions.***

IAs are only issued by specially trained and skilled Parks Inspectors. Parks will continue to treat conditions discovered by M&O field staff supervision with the same gravity as those found by PIP Inspectors. The Borough Supervisor of Trades and/or the Deputy Chief of Operations make the determination of the severity of the work order, the hazardous nature of the condition, and the scheduling of repair work. In addition, a new mobile handheld inspection module is being implemented in AMPS to enhance inspections for M&O. This will allow Parks supervisors to conduct field inspections on their mobile hand held devices, which will enhance the management of IA conditions. Supervisors will also continue to identify conditions using the same language and standards as per the PIP program.

***Response to Section Recommendation 2: Remediate all work orders with hazardous conditions within 30 days.***

Parks has a system in place to manage and monitor IAs, which ensures that all IAs are properly resolved within a specified timeframe. Please see the response to Recommendation 3, below, for further details. However, Parks continuously close out any work orders within a reasonable time frame. If a work order is considered hazardous, Parks will ensure the work is done as soon as possible, and minimally, the area will be made safe for the general public.

***Response to Section Recommendation 3: Ensure that IAs are resolved within 30 days.***

Parks policy is to resolve all IAs within 30 days and will continue to monitor and follow-up on all conditions that are hazardous. In order to ensure IAs are resolved promptly, we currently have the Daily Immediate Attention ("DIA") System that manages and monitors the number of IAs as well as the resolution of these hazards. In order to ensure proper resolution of an IA, only authorized staff members can resolve an IA with the required upload of pictures as documentation of corrected hazards. For quality assurance, we also have in place a follow-up review process that takes a sample of IAs resolved to *further* ensure these hazards are properly corrected. In addition, IAs identified are emailed to operations managers the same day to alert them of any items identified. Lastly, there are bi-weekly reports and analyses on IAs that are reported to the Borough Chief of Operations.

***Response to Section Recommendation 4: Categorize work order repair types and assign specific timeframes for remediating repairs in each category.***

Parks does categorize work orders, but it is based on the Borough Supervisor of Trades and/or the Deputy Chief of Operations to prioritize work orders and schedule the repair work. Furthermore, work order timeframes may also be dependent on capital work being scheduled and may result in extended periods for completion.

***Response to Section Recommendation 5: Categorize conditions identified by District Supervisors using the same criteria used by the PIP inspectors.***

A new mobile handheld inspection module is being implemented in AMPS to enhance inspections for M&O. This will allow Parks supervisors to conduct field inspections on their mobile hand held devices. Further, they will use standards to conduct these inspections from the **PIP** manual. Supervisors will also continue to identify conditions using the same language and standards as per the PIP program.



***Response to Section Recommendation 6: Monitor open work orders that are identified as hazardous and resolve them promptly.***

All Supervisors have the ability to view work orders identified as being a hazardous condition and can ascertain the age of any work order generated. Parks will continue to resolve these issues as promptly as situations allow.

***Response to Section Recommendation 7: Regularly monitor the status of open work orders and update them in AMPS.***

As the auditors are aware, in a number of instances work order conditions were corrected but their status in AMPS was not updated. As a result, District Supervision will be advised to assess the state of open work on a monthly basis, and make any required updates. Furthermore, the Borough Supervisor of Trades and/or the Deputy Chief of Operations prioritize repair work orders, depending on the nature of the work order, the hazardous nature of the condition, and the scheduling of repair work.

***Response to Section Recommendation 8: Follow up on work requests to ensure they have been processed.***

District Supervision will be advised to assess the state of work that needs to be done on a monthly basis, and follow up with the appropriate parties in order to complete the work orders.

***Response to Section Recommendation 9: Install an edit check program in AMPS to ensure that proper dates are entered.***

There is no need for an edit check to ensure proper dates are entered. When a work order is created a date is entered by the system. There are times that work was completed, prior to a work order created in the AMPS system, but these work orders were closed out later. In addition, these transactions make up a very small percentage of the overall number of work orders created in the system.

***Response to Section Recommendation 10: Create work orders in AMPS before the repairs are completed.***

With improvements to the AMPS handheld devices currently being implemented, trades workers will have the ability to create work orders in the field as necessary. Emergency situations will occasionally arise in the field, and emergency work will continue to be done in a timely nature regardless of the creation of a formal work request/order if the severity of the work dictates.