

April 16, 2004

**MAYOR MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS  
COMMISSIONER GRETCHEN DYKSTRA RELEASE RESULTS OF CITYWIDE  
ILLEGAL SALES STINGS**

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Gretchen Dykstra today released results of two comprehensive Citywide stings conducted over the past eight months and intended to crack down on illegal sales of box cutters, laser pointers, and spray paint to minors. DCA conducted 230 inspections using undercover teens throughout the City, including 100 stores in neighborhoods containing the City's 12 Impact Schools. Results of inspections over the past eight months show high compliance Citywide: 79% of stores did not sell box cutters; 85% did not sell spray paint; and 96% did not sell laser pointers to kids under 18. Stores that were not in compliance received violations for each sale and the maximum penalties allowed by law. Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly and Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein joined the Mayor for the announcement at Big John's Department Store in Brooklyn. "Box cutters and laser pointers pose serious safety issues for children and unnecessary hazards for our police officers and teachers, while spray paint invites graffiti into our neighborhoods, hurting our quality of life," said Mayor Bloomberg. "Box cutters, spray paint and laser pointers should never be in the hands of minors and we're working hard to make sure stores get the message that these items aren't sold."

"Compliance among stores is high because businesses are getting the message," said DCA Commissioner Gretchen Dykstra. "Conducting strategic sweeps throughout the five boroughs, combined with routine inspections and increased business education, allows us to effectively cover more ground, and we'll continue to do so."

"Box cutters were once the weapon of choice for gang members. But even on this front we are seeing progress," said Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly. "Gang-related slashings are half of what they were at this point last year. In addition to restrictions on sales, the law that restricts possession of box cutters to persons who use them in legitimate employment, like shipping clerks, has been tremendously helpful."

Compliance rates for box cutters, laser pointers and spray paint are broken down below:

**CITYWIDE: MANHATTAN:**

Total stores visited: 230 Total stores visited: 70  
Box Cutters: 79% compliance Box Cutters: 81% compliance  
Spray Paint: 85% compliance Spray Paint: 87% compliance  
Laser Pointers: 96% compliance Laser Pointers: 98% compliance

**BROOKLYN: BRONX:**

Total stores visited: 74 Total stores visited: 35  
Box Cutters: 69% compliance Box Cutters: 89% compliance  
Spray Paint: 93% compliance Spray Paint: 66% compliance  
Laser Pointers: 90% compliance Laser Pointers: 100% compliance

**QUEENS: STATEN ISLAND:**

Total stores visited: 42 Total stores visited: 9  
Box Cutters: 83% compliance Box Cutters: 78% compliance

Spray Paint: 81% compliance Spray Paint: 78% compliance

Laser Pointers: 98% compliance Laser Pointers: 89% compliance

In 2002, Home Depot paid the City \$125,000 to settle multiple counts of selling box cutters and aerosol spray paint to kids. As part of the agreement, Home Depot revised its procedures, trained personnel so that they are aware of City law, and restricted the display and sale of box cutters and aerosol spray paint cans. In addition, Home Depot has maintained its equipment so that registers automatically prompt cashiers to check ID of purchasers. Follow-up inspections show increased compliance.

Under New York City's Consumer Protection and Public Safety laws, it is illegal to sell box cutters, laser pointers, and spray paint to anyone under the age of 18. Maximum fines are \$500 per illegal sale of box cutters and spray paint, and \$300 per illegal sale of laser pointers.

In addition, DCA routinely inspects stores for illegal sales of fake guns.

In an effort to make sure businesses know the law, the DCA increased outreach by creating and distributing thousands of new materials, including *What Retailers Need to Know* and *What Service Companies Need to Know*, in both English and Spanish. To report a store selling illegal items to minors or for more information, call 311 or visit the Department of Consumer Affairs' Web site through [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov)