

**CONSUMER AFFAIRS REMINDS HOMEOWNERS TO BE
VIGILANT WHEN PURCHASING HEATING OIL THIS WINTER**

DCA Offers Tips to Ensure Consumers Get What They Pay For

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Marking the official beginning of the heating oil season, the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) today reminded New Yorkers to be vigilant when purchasing home heating oil and to take the necessary precautionary steps to ensure they don't get short changed.

"Getting less than what you pay for can leave you feeling a bit chilly," said DCA Commissioner Gretchen Dykstra. "We inspected more than 1,400 home heating oil delivery trucks operating in New York City last year to confirm that the meter of each is registering accurately. Citywide compliance remains high, but consumers should still take steps to protect themselves like requesting to see a truck's certificate of inspection, calling 311 to check a retailer's history, and reading the fine print of any signed contract."

By law, DCA inspects home heating oil delivery truck meters annually. During these routine inspections, the DCA confirms that the truck's meter accurately registers how much oil it pumps, placing an official seal on the meter. DCA also checks for faulty air eliminator devices. Without an intact seal on the meter, retailers could modify their meters, increasing the chance of "short-weighting" their customers. Also, if a truck has a faulty air eliminator device, a meter might register more home heating oil than the consumer actually receives.

Last year, the DCA conducted 1,406 heating oil delivery truck inspections, condemned 114 trucks, and reported a citywide compliance rate of 92%. Inspections are done at the agency's test station in Brooklyn, or during routine surprise inspections at truck refueling terminals throughout the City.

DCA offers the following tips to homeowners:

- Check the truck's meter for an official DCA seal and certificate of inspection.
The official DCA seal and certificate of inspection certifies that the truck has been inspected, and when.
- Check your receipt.
Law requires retailers to provide a receipt showing how much oil you received and how much you paid per unit of oil.
- Check your oil tank gauge before and after filling.
Although some gauges may be inaccurate due to age, many can give you a rough estimate of how much oil you have received.
- Get a written contract and read the fine print.
Always get a written contract that includes all costs, delivery schedule, gallons promised, and any other details that have been agreed upon between the provider and customer. Make sure that the salesperson or manager of the distributor signs the contract before payment. Also, before signing, check for hidden costs, fees or minimum purchasing requirements that may appear in the contract.
- Use a reputable supplier.
Call 311 to check a retailer's complaint history.

DCA enforces the City's Consumer Protection Law, Weights and Measures Law, and other related laws at thousands of businesses throughout New York City. Fostering a marketplace where consumers are protected and businesses can thrive, DCA licenses more than 60,000 businesses in 55 different categories citywide. Through free community seminars, licensing forums, and other informational materials, DCA educates consumers and businesses alike about their rights and responsibilities.