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**Subject:** NYCEDC and Helicopter Tourism & Jobs Council Announce New Measures to Reduce Helicopter Noise and Impacts Across New York City

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January 31, 2016

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**NYCEDC and Helicopter Tourism & Jobs Council Announce New Measures to Reduce Helicopter Noise and Impacts Across New York City**

*New Agreement Reduces Days of Operation and Number of Flights, Ends Flights Over Governor's Island, Protects Key Tourism Industry and Transportation Facility*

New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) and the Helicopter Tourism and Jobs Council (HTJC) today announced an agreement to significantly reduce the impact of tourism helicopters on New York City residents while simultaneously preserving an industry that brings in millions of tourism dollars each year.

Under the agreement, tour operators will reduce the number of flights to and from the Downtown Manhattan Heliport at Pier 6 in Lower Manhattan by 50 percent by January 2017, resulting in the elimination of nearly 30,000 flights per year. In addition, operators have agreed to end all flights on Sundays and prohibit flights over Governor's Island. Operators will be required to provide monthly reporting on the number of flights conducted, and if they are determined to have violated key terms of the agreement, NYCEDC will have authority to mandate further reduction in operations.

In addition to supporting economic activity in lower Manhattan, the Downtown Manhattan Heliport serves as a critical part of the city's transportation infrastructure. It was one of the first facilities in operation following Hurricane Sandy and served as a staging area for storm recovery operations. It is also the only heliport in the five boroughs large enough to accommodate landings by Marine One during Presidential visits.

“The non-stop din of helicopters has been a major quality of life issue for New Yorkers living near heavily trafficked routes,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Today we’re addressing it. We’ve reached an agreement that will significantly cut down on the number of helicopter tours near residential areas and major parks, while keeping this part of our tourism sector active and viable. Everyone gave a little to get to this outcome, but the solution will mean a more livable city for everyone.”

“Today’s agreement is a triple win: it will help improve the quality of life of New Yorkers in waterfront communities, preserve an important tourism industry, and support a vital piece of our transportation infrastructure,” said **NYCEDC President Maria Torres-Springer**. “I want to thank Saker Aviation, the members of the Helicopter Tourism and Jobs Council, and the elected officials and community leaders who worked with us to craft this plan.”

“Saker Aviation wants to thank EDC and the Mayor for working so diligently to find a way to harmonize the interests of all stakeholders,” said **Ron Ricciardi, President of Saker Aviation**. “This agreement will ensure the Downtown Manhattan Heliport remains a vibrant part of the City’s life, as a business hub and a tourism mecca. We are proud to remain the City’s concessionaire and partner in the years to come.”

“This agreement will allow tour operators to continue providing good jobs for New Yorkers and more than \$50 million in annual economic impact to the City,” said **Sam Goldstein, Deputy Director of the Helicopter Tourism and Jobs Council**. “We look forward to working with our partners in government as we continue to fly people high above the greatest skyline in the world for many years to come.”

“Today’s announcement - a 50 percent reduction in tourist helicopter flights and no flights on Sundays - is a huge step forward in protecting the quality of life of thousands of New Yorkers, and offers our constituents some sense of immediate relief,” said **Council Members Carlos Menchaca, Helen Rosenthal, and Margaret Chin**. “As Council Members, we are proud to have pushed forward legislation that helped give our constituents a voice and a rallying point in the fight to reduce noise and air pollution caused by the increasing number of tourist helicopter flights. We want to thank the residents who have advocated relentlessly on this issue, as well as our elected partners: Congressman Jerry Nadler, Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez, State Senator Daniel Squadron, and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer. The requirements for the industry to monitor the number of tours, amount of noise, and air quality are critical components of our ongoing efforts to hold the industry accountable. We pledge to remain vigilant, and we will use our oversight role on the Council judiciously. We are encouraged by the helicopter industry’s commitment to a steep reduction in the number of flights, and we are grateful to the Administration for listening to the concerns of residents in our recent Committee Hearing and working to find a resolution after years of inaction. This is an important recognition of the impact that noise has on the quality of life for New Yorkers and the start of a less noisy and more livable city for those in the flight path.”

Today's agreement was the result of months of good faith negotiations between NYCEDC and the HTJC, working in partnership with a number of elected officials. Specific terms of the agreement include:

- The heliport concessionaire will prohibit all tourist flight operations from the Downtown Manhattan Heliport on Sundays beginning on April 1, 2016.
- The heliport concessionaire will reduce the total allowable number of tourist flight operations from 2015 levels by 20 percent beginning June 1, 2016; by 40 percent beginning October 1, 2016; and ultimately reaching a 50 percent reduction by the beginning of 2017. Flights in excess of these thresholds will trigger further reductions in tour flight levels.
- Starting in July 2016, the operators will provide a monthly written report to NYCEDC and the New York City Council detailing the number of tourist flight operations conducted out of the Downtown Manhattan Heliport as compared to these agreed upon levels. The report will also include information on any tour helicopter flights that fly over land and stray from agreed upon routes over water. A third party firm will be made available to verify these reports periodically.
- The heliport concessionaire has reaffirmed its commitment to prohibiting operators from flying over Governor's Island while conducting tourist flight operations. Flights over Governor's Island will subject the concessionaire to further reductions in allowable tour flight levels.
- Although tourist flight operations do not pass over Staten Island, helicopters travelling to and from their home bases outside New York City sometimes do. Effective immediately, the concessionaire will require any such flights over Staten Island to ensure maximum altitude, working in coordination with the air control towers at Newark and LaGuardia airports.
- The heliport concessionaire will establish a system to monitor air quality in the vicinity of the Downtown Manhattan Heliport and report monthly on readings to NYCEDC and the New York City Council.
- The heliport concessionaire will make best efforts to curtail idling by tour helicopters at the Downtown Manhattan Heliport during the periods between flights.
- The heliport concessionaire will actively research available technologies to further mitigate helicopter noise, reduce emissions, and promote fuel efficiency, and to implement any such technology as it becomes commercially feasible.

Members of the HTJC operate tourist flights through a concession agreement with NYCEDC. Tour activity used to be concentrated at the heliport on East 34<sup>th</sup> Street and the East River. but was subsequently moved from the east side and split between the Downtown Manhattan Heliport and West 30<sup>th</sup> Street Heliport, controlled by the Hudson River Park Trust. In 2010, tour flights were eliminated from West 30<sup>th</sup> Street, and since that time all tour flights in Manhattan have been conducted from the downtown heliport.

In early 2010, NYCEDC convened operators, the Federal Aviation Administration and local elected officials in revising the tour routes. Tours over areas such as Central Park were eliminated and two mandated tour routes were established, both of which left the downtown heliport via the Buttermilk Channel between Governors Island and Red Hook, then circled the Statue of Liberty before proceeding up the Hudson River. The shorter tour turned back south along the Hudson near the 79<sup>th</sup> Street boat basin and the longer tour continued across Manhattan near 155<sup>th</sup> Street to provide a view of Yankee Stadium. In January 2015 the Yankee Stadium flyover was eliminated, and all designated tour routes have since been entirely over water.

### **About NYCEDC**

[New York City Economic Development Corporation](#) is the City's primary vehicle for promoting economic growth in each of the five boroughs. NYCEDC's mission is to stimulate growth through expansion and redevelopment programs that encourage investment, generate prosperity and strengthen the City's competitive position. NYCEDC serves as an advocate to the business community by building relationships with companies that allow them to take advantage of New York City's many opportunities. Find us on [Facebook](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#), or visit our [blog](#) to learn more about NYCEDC projects and initiatives.



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