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DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS (DCA) RECEIVES RESPONSES TO ITS INVESTIGATION INTO THE SIGHTSEEING BUS INDUSTRY

DCA Subpoenas Seek to Shed Light on Companies' Safety, Record Keeping and Other Responsibilities

The Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) started to receive responses to subpoenas sent to sightseeing bus company licensees only days before the latest accident on November 11 at Broadway and Liberty Street. On September 26, DCA launched a wide-ranging investigation of the sightseeing tour bus industry, issuing subpoenas to all 14 companies licensed by DCA to operate in New York City. While DCA does not have responsibility for safety inspections, due to the industry's recent accidents, the agency is proactively collaborating with City and state agencies that share regulation of the industry to improve safety and oversight.

"In light of the accident in August in Times Square and last Tuesday night in Lower Manhattan, it is more important than ever to aggressively seek information about this industry," said DCA Commissioner Julie Menin. "We are reviewing the responses we have received but urge the remaining companies to act quickly and work with us to ensure the safety of New York City's tourists."

The sightseeing bus industry is licensed and regulated by a variety of City and state agencies. DCA licenses the companies and is responsible for inspecting for signage, headsets, and the cleanliness of the buses, among other things. DCA's investigation seeks to discover whether the tour bus companies are maintaining the records they are required to by law. The New York State Department of Transportation is responsible for inspecting buses every six months for safety.

The 14 licensed companies operate a total of approximately 230 buses, which is 170 more buses than only ten years ago.

"These records can help us learn whether or not the companies are operating in a safe, legal manner," said DCA Commissioner Menin. "For example, we want to know if they

are using well-maintained buses and licensed drivers. The city cannot afford to have unsafe tour buses on our streets.”

The subpoenas ask companies to produce records of trip details for each trip their buses make including: the name and license number of the person or persons who solicited the costumers on the trip; the name and DCA license of the sightseeing guide on the trip; the name and license of the driver; the license number of the vehicle used; records of any accidents that might have occurred; and documentation to show the number of hours each driver operated a sightseeing bus each day.

In conjunction with this investigation, Commissioner Menin wrote a letter to the New York State Department of Transportation Commissioner Joan McDonald in hopes of a long-term collaboration. Both agencies are committed to working together to coordinate oversight of the industry.

The Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) licenses, inspects, and educates businesses, mediates complaints, educates consumers, and offers free financial counseling and safe banking products. DCA enforces the Consumer Protection Law, the Paid Sick Leave Law and other related business laws throughout New York City and licenses nearly 80,000 businesses in 55 different industries. Through targeted outreach, partnerships with community and trade organizations, and informational materials, DCA educates consumers and businesses alike about their rights and responsibilities. DCA’s Office of Financial Empowerment assists low-income New Yorkers with innovative programs and services to increase access to high-quality, low-cost financial education and counseling, safe and affordable mainstream banking, and access to income-boosting tax credits and savings. For more information, call 311 or visit DCA online at [nyc.gov/consumers](http://www.nyc.gov/consumers) (link to: <http://www.nyc.gov/consumers>) or on its social media sites, [Twitter](http://www.twitter.com/nycdca) (link to: <http://www.twitter.com/nycdca>), [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/nycdca) (link to: <http://www.facebook.com/nycdca>), [Instagram](http://www.instagram.com/nycdca) (link to: <http://www.instagram.com/nycdca>), and [YouTube](http://www.youtube.com/nycdca) (link to: <http://www.youtube.com/nycdca>).