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New Silver Alert Law Enhances Public Notification System to Aid Search for Missing Seniors

—Builds on the City’s Senior Alert system by engaging the media and other public venues in helping to find vulnerable seniors who suffer from dementia due to Alzheimer’s disease or a similar condition —

—Silver Alert legislation is a key component of the City’s Age-Friendly NYC effort—

NEW YORK, NY – October 6, 2010 – Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg today signed historic legislation making New York City one of the first municipalities to create a Silver Alert system to aid police in the search for missing older adults with dementia. Silver Alert, a citywide public notification system, will be activated by the NYPD when a senior (65 or older) with dementia is reported missing and deemed to be in imminent danger of serious physical injury or death. The purpose of the law is to address wandering behavior often associated with dementia caused by Alzheimer’s disease or a similar condition and to aid in the safe return of vulnerable seniors. This legislation is a result of the Age Friendly NYC plan and represents a strong collaboration between DFTA, the NYPD, OEM and the City Council.

The new law expands on Senior Alert, a notification protocol issued by the City in April, which uses Notify NYC to inform subscribers when a vulnerable senior goes missing. Notify NYC issues similar notification in cases of Amber Alerts or Missing Child/ College Student Alerts. The legislation expands notification of missing seniors to a wider audience, including organizations such as media outlets, senior service providers, medical facilities and community organizations. Silver Alerts will be accompanied by a special number that the public will be asked to call to provide any tips. Eventually, Silver Alerts will also be wirelessly transmitted to the City’s more than 13,000 taxis. Silver Alert is one of 59 initiatives outlined in the City’s Age-Friendly NYC effort.

“This legislation is not only a key initiative in the City’s Age-Friendly NYC effort to make New York City the most age-friendly in the world, but it will save the lives of older New Yorkers who may go missing by vastly expediting the search process through public engagement,” said Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda I. Gibbs. “As one of the first municipalities to launch a missing person notification system, New York City stands out as a leader in ensuring that seniors have a safe place to grow old.”

“I would like to thank Mayor Bloomberg and Speaker Quinn for their ongoing commitment and dedication to older New Yorkers, their families and caregivers,” said Department for the Aging Commissioner Lilliam Barrios-Paoli. “This legislation will have a great impact on reducing the risk of

harm to vulnerable seniors who, because of Alzheimer's or other similar impairments, may find themselves in danger as a result of their condition. DFTA will continue our work in providing services and support to the caregivers and families of individuals with Alzheimer's and Silver Alert will help us to identify the families in need of assistance."

"My grandmother had dementia and my grandfather had Alzheimer's. So I know all too well how difficult it can be to care for someone suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's disease. And nothing is scarier than the thought of them going missing. This safety system will be a great help to seniors and to their families," said Council Member Jessica Lappin, Chair of the City Council Committee on Aging.

This notification system furthers the City's Age-Friendly NYC campaign, a set of 59 initiatives unveiled in August 2009 by Mayor Bloomberg, in conjunction with the City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, and the New York Academy of Medicine. In recognition of the fact that New York City's senior population is expected to increase by approximately 50% during the next 25 years, Age-Friendly NYC was launched to assess the City's responsiveness to the needs of older New Yorkers, develop recommendations, and implement strategies that will allow New York to sustain and enhance its status as an "age-friendly" city. Other initiatives have included MarketRide, a partnership with the Department of Education to provide buses that take seniors to green markets to purchase fresh food, and Senior Savvy, a partnership with Department of Consumer Affairs to educate seniors about financial fraud and scams.

In June 2010, New York City became the first member of the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-friendly Cities. The Network aims to help cities create urban environments that allow older people to remain active and healthy participants in society. Mayor Bloomberg was presented with a certificate of membership on June 29, 2010.

Background on Amber Alerts

The New York State *America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response (AMBER)* Alert Program is activated by the New York State Police when an investigating police agency confirms that: an abduction of a child (under the age of 18) has occurred, and the child is believed to be in danger of serious bodily harm or death, either due to the actions of another or due to a proven mental or physical condition. Amber Alerts within New York City are now sent to Notify NYC subscribers.

Background on Missing Child/College Student Alerts

The New York State Missing Child/College Student Alert program is activated by the NYS DCJS Missing and Exploited Children Clearinghouse when a child or college student (any age) is reported missing and deemed to be endangered, but known circumstances do not meet AMBER activation criteria. Missing Child/College Student Alerts within New York City are now sent to Notify NYC subscribers.

Alerts sent through Notify NYC are also posted at www.nyc.gov and on Twitter and distributed to call takers at 311 and 911 to ensure that information the City provides is accurate, timely and consistent.