



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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Release #14-2015
nyc.gov/html/doi

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MONDAY MAY 11, 2015

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DOI Commissioner Mark G. Peters' Remarks
On Announcement for Homeless Shelter Inspection Task Force
Monday, May 11, 2015, 1:30 p.m.
Corona Family Residence, 38-01 112th Street, Flushing, Queens

Thank you Mayor de Blasio and to all the City agencies involved in this initiative. The task force announced today demonstrates that when government confronts problems head on, real reform is possible.

Last year, DOI began looking at the conditions of homeless shelters for families with children, after learning about the dire and dangerous environments that many of them posed. The media documented the grim conditions at many of these shelters. And the Mayor asked DOI to get to the bottom of what was going on.

We did. Our investigation – released in a Report two months ago – made a number of important findings, including:

- shelters for homeless families with children in urgent need of repair – extensive vermin infestations, blocked or obstructed means of egress, non-working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and improper and/or missing Certificates of Occupancy; and
- a system with no effective means of fixing violations because too many shelters were not under contract.

DOI's investigation brought together many of the essential agencies needed to address these critical situations, for the first time coordinating buildings and fire inspectors to find the violations and fix them.

A key recommendation from DOI's Report was a task force that would streamline communication and action between DHS and the agencies that oversee inspections of these shelters was key.

Today, the City is acting on DOI's recommendation and establishing an inter-agency Shelter Repair Squad to aggressively address safety and health violations at the City's homeless shelters. DOI believes that this working group will be instrumental in the effort to improve shelters, keep them safe and livable, and hold landlords accountable for the properties they manage and for which they receive City funding.

This task force is one of five major recommendations DOI made to DHS, all of which have been adopted, most notably DHS's commitment to place all of its shelters under contracts with enforcement provisions.

Let me be clear:

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- This task force is a huge step forward.
- True improvement will come with time and attentiveness by all.
- As the City's Inspector General, DOI will continue to be vigilant, to root out wrongdoing and fraud, to make arrests when criminal conduct is substantiated, and to find where City government needs to be more efficient and effective and issue real-world recommendations to achieve that goal.

Thank you.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country and New York City's corruption watchdog. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City. DOI's strategy attacks corruption comprehensively through systemic investigations that lead to high-impact arrests, preventive internal controls and operational reforms that improve the way the City runs.

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