



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 9, 2009

**FINANCE COMMISSIONER MARTHA E. STARK AND DEP ACTING
COMMISSIONER STEVEN LAWITTS REACH OUT TO HELP AT RISK
HOMEOWNERS**

*MAILING AIMS TO HELP ELIGIBLE SENIORS, DISABLED HOMEOWNERS, ACTIVE
MILITARY PERSONNEL AVOID LIEN SALE*

*8,922 DELINQUENT HOMEOWNERS MUST QUALIFY FOR EXEMPTIONS OR RESOLVE
DEBT BY MAY 1*

Finance Commissioner Martha E. Stark and Acting Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Steven Lawitts today announced a joint mailing to all 8,922 owners of 1-, 2-, and 3-family homes that are still at risk of having a lien sold on their property.

The mailing includes a questionnaire that seniors, people with disabilities and active military personnel can fill out to let the Department of Finance know if they are eligible for an exemption that allows them to avoid the lien sale and reduce future tax bills.

Owners have until May 1 to qualify for the Senior Citizen Homeowner Exemption or the Disabled Homeowner Exemption, or let us know that they are active military personnel.

“Helping people pay the right amount on time means making sure we don't sell a lien until we are sure that we have done everything possible to make sure people know about the benefits that they may qualify for,” said Finance Commissioner Stark.

“Effective enforcement tools are essential to ensure that everyone pays his or her fair share, but equally important is that our most vulnerable neighbors take advantage of the programs and exemptions that can help them, particularly now,” said DEP Acting Commissioner Lawitts.

Homeowners are at risk of having a lien sold on their property if they have property tax debt of at least \$1,000 that is three years old, or at least \$1,000 in water charges that is at least one year old. Owners of commercial property are at risk if they have any amount of outstanding taxes or water charges older than one year.

The targeted mailing to homeowners is the fourth mailing they will have received from the Department of Finance, and the latest step taken by Finance and DEP to help owners resolve their debt before May 1.

Finance and DEP mailed notices to all at-risk owners in early February, early March and again last week. In addition, a notice listing all the at-risk properties was published in the New York Post in February, and updates have been posted at nyc.gov/finance.

Finance, DEP, and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development have combined to sponsor 22 outreach events with members of the City Council to offer help to property owners, and plan to follow the current mailing with telephone calls to at risk homeowners.

Installment plans are available. Payments can be made online, at any of Finance's Borough Business Centers or by mail, regardless of where the property is located. To ensure timely processing, Finance advises owners *not* to make payments by mail after April 22. Lien sale information is available online in Spanish, Chinese, and Russian, and available by calling 311.

Owners who need help resolving their debt or believe that the City's records are incorrect should contact Finance or DEP immediately. Information is available at www.nyc.gov/liensale or by calling 311.

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