OFFICE OF THE TENANT ADVOCATE
QUARTERLY REPORT
Fourth Quarter of 2019

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BACKGROUND

• This quarterly report has been prepared pursuant to Local Law 161 of 2017 and covers the fourth quarter of 2019.
The number of complaints received by the Office of the Tenant Advocate (“OTA”) and a description of such complaints.

- This quarter, the Office of the Tenant Advocate (OTA) received 660 inquiries, 40 of which were referred to the Office of the Building Marshal (“OBM”) at the Department of Buildings, 15 to other DOB Enforcement Units and 49 to other city and state agencies. This total does not include the 319 complaints filed through NYC 311 related to construction as harassment, which were routed directly to OBM during this reporting period.

- Inquiries received by the OTA primarily include:
  - Inquiries pertaining to general maintenance and essential services requirements;
  - Work Without a Permit complaints;
  - Failure to comply with a Tenant Protection Plan complaints;
  - Failure to post a Tenant Protection Plan Notice or Safe Construction Bill of Rights complaints; and
  - Inquiries pertaining to Department processes (e.g. how to post or deliver tenant protection plans);
The average time taken to respond to complaints.

- The average response time from the date on which an inquiry was received by the OTA to the date on which it was responded to was 1.5 business days.

- Where an inquiry requires an inspection, the Office of the Buildings Marshal is currently performing such inspection within .96 days of the date of referral.

Notable activities and staffing changes during the fourth quarter:

- In November 2019, DOB restructured the OTA, moving it into the Enforcement Unit and hired a new Executive Director, Sarah Desmond, who previously served as the longtime Executive Director of a NYC not-for-profit legal services organization, comes to DOB with more than 25 years of experience in NYC housing and building issues.
A description of efforts made to communicate with tenants.

• The OTA interacts with members of the public, including tenants, on a regular basis. The OTA’s contact information is listed on the Department’s website, which allows the public to contact the OTA directly. The OTA can be contacted at: (212) 393-2949 or tenantadvocate@buildings.nyc.gov

• The OTA also serves as a resource to community based organizations, city, state and federal elected officials, and government agencies.

• This quarter, OTA’s new Executive Director met with elected officials, city agencies and representatives from community-based and city-wide not-for profit organizations.
Landlords must also post and distribute copies of our new Local Law 110 of 2019 Tenant Information flyer, which details next steps in the violation process. 
www1.nyc.gov/assets/buildin...
The number of recommendations made to the Commissioner to issue a stop work order for a site that is not complying with a tenant protection plan and the number of such recommendations followed by the Commissioner.

This quarter, 21 Office of the Building Marshal (OBM) inspections stemming from tenant harassment complaints resulted in a Stop Work Order. Additionally 34 OBM inspections resulted in a Stop Work Order for failure to comply with the Tenant Protection Plan. Finally, as a result of proactive inspections, 41 Stop Work Orders were issued to contractors who are listed on the Department Of Buildings’ published watch list for contractors found to have performed work without a required permit in the preceding two years.