



What Happens to Your 311 Rat Complaint?

What happens after I submit a rat complaint to 311?

Your complaint will be routed to the New York City (NYC) Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Health Department). The Health Department will inspect the property within around two weeks of receiving the complaint, unless the property was recently inspected. Before submitting your complaint, visit nyc.gov/rats and enter the street address to see if the property was recently inspected. Another complaint submitted soon after an inspection would be considered a duplicate and will not result in another inspection.

When submitting a complaint, be sure to include as much location information as possible, including the street address and where on the property the rat activity was observed. The Health Department cannot inspect a property if there is insufficient location information provided with the complaint. Also, if you are reporting conditions within a building or in an area inaccessible to the inspector, you should provide a contact (such as an occupant or neighbor) who can grant access to the inspector.

What will inspectors look for during an initial inspection?

Health Department inspectors visually inspect the exterior of the property to identify signs of rats or conditions that rats favor. If no such signs or conditions are present, the property passes the inspection and the **311** complaint is closed. If signs of rats or conditions that rats favor are present at the time of inspection, the property fails the inspection.

What are signs of rat activity?

- Tracks
- Fresh droppings
- Burrows (earthen or structural)
- Active rat pathways
- Fresh gnaw marks
- Live or dead rats

What are conditions that rats favor?

- Exposed or uncontained garbage — attracts and feeds rats
- Harborage conditions, such as clutter or overgrown vegetation — provides shelter and habitat for rats

What happens when a property fails the initial inspection?

When a property fails an initial inspection, the Health Department sends the property owner a Commissioner's Order to Abate (COTA). The COTA will contain the inspection report detailing the findings and guidance on how to address problematic conditions, including relevant contact

information. The property owner can contact the Health Department for help addressing the problem(s) or to contest the findings.

A property owner has a minimum of five days to either fix the conditions or to contact the Health Department for help. Once conditions have been addressed, an inspector will then conduct a follow-up (compliance) inspection. If no signs of rats are present or if no conditions that rats favor are present, the property passes the compliance inspection. If such signs or conditions are still present, the property fails the compliance inspection.

What happens after a compliance inspection?

If the property passes the compliance inspection, the **311** complaint is closed and no summons is issued.

If the property fails the compliance inspection, the property owner receives a summons for a hearing at the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH). More information about OATH hearings is available at nyc.gov/oath.

What if a property owner does not take action to reduce rat activity on their property?

The Health Department may take action to address rat activity when the owner fails to do so. The owner will be billed if the Health Department needs to:

- Perform additional compliance inspections
- Bait the property or conduct monitoring visits
- Clean up harborage conditions

How much can a property owner be fined for a failed compliance inspection?

All fines are assessed by OATH. Property owners who do not show up to their hearings or default on their fines may have their fines doubled by OATH. The minimum fine amount is \$300 and the maximum amount is \$2,000.

What is the total turnaround time for a 311 complaint?

It can take up to 90 days to complete all follow-up activities related to a property that failed an inspection. If multiple complaints are made about a single property in a 90-day period, one inspection cycle typically occurs and the additional complaints are treated as duplicates. Visit the [NYC Rat Information Portal](#) to view inspection findings and follow-up actions.