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MEDIA CONTACT: Edward Michel, Inspector General

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Phone Number: 504-681-3200

OIG FOUND GAPS IN CITY HVAC PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE

As detailed in the HVAC Maintenance and Repair Policies and Procedures public letter released today, the New Orleans Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted an assessment of the Department of Property Management's policies and procedures for maintaining and repairing HVAC systems in City buildings for the period of January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023. The OIG concluded that the City did not have adequate policies and standard operating procedures to ensure HVAC systems in City buildings were properly maintained throughout the year.

The Department of Property Management (DPM) is responsible for maintaining HVAC systems in all City buildings, with the exception of facilities operated by the New Orleans Public Library and the New Orleans Recreation Department. Over the past few years, there has been concern that excessive heat during the summer could negatively impact City operations. Isolated high-profile cases of HVAC failures at various public buildings heightened these concerns.

During the OIG's assessment, evaluators discovered the DPM did not have policies and procedures in place to ensure maintenance activities were conducted regularly at City buildings. While a few larger buildings with HVAC plants had on-site engineers monitor HVAC equipment, smaller buildings, including many police and fire stations, did not receive regular maintenance. With the exception of hand-written logs, DPM also had no mechanisms in place to track maintenance activities and schedules, or a system to manage HVAC assets.

To address these findings, the OIG recommended DPM adopt and implement an equipment management plan similar to that used by the State of Louisiana. Second, the OIG recommended DPM address staffing needs for adequate in-house maintenance, especially where smaller City buildings were concerned. Finally, the OIG recommended the DPM take all necessary steps to ensure a new multi-departmental asset management system is fully integrated into its maintenance and repair operations, including a new equipment management plan.

Inspector General Ed Michel stated:

“As New Orleans continues to experience extreme heat events, it is critical to the health and safety of citizens and City employees that HVAC systems in City buildings are working properly. While the OIG is encouraged the DPM has taken steps to improve operations by seeking maintenance contracts, the department must also work to mitigate damage through regular preventive maintenance.”

In addition to today's report, the OIG released a brief with highlights. Go to www.nolaog.gov to view all OIG reports.