



In the Redfern Houses (main photo) in Queens and at the Vandalia Senior Center (bottom inset) in Brooklyn, people complained of no heat, but NYCHA call center told them that "service has been restored."

NYCHA ON SPOT

Folks shiver as city probes repair-request fiasco

BY EDGAR SANDOVAL,
LEONARD GREENE
and GREG B. SMITH
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

CITY INVESTIGATORS are turning up the heat on NYCHA for leaving nearly 1,500 Queens residents in the cold.

The Department of Investigation has launched a probe into how NYCHA responded to massive heat system failures at the sprawling Redfern Houses in Far Rockaway, Queens, during the recent big freeze.

Over the weekend leading up to New Year's Eve and into last week, Redfern's heat system kept breaking down due to boiler failures and frozen pipes.

The development's 1,485 residents live just one block from the water and were forced to don multiple layers indoors and boil water on stoves to stay warm in the bone-chilling cold.

Public Advocate Letitia James obtained records showing NYCHA had closed "no-heat" service-request tickets at Redfern

on Jan. 2 at a time when the heat was still out throughout the development.

And the ticket problem may be wider spread.

Danny Barber, a tenant district leader for the South Bronx, said NYCHA is resetting boilers, then closing out entire buildings' tickets without checking to see if apartments actually have heat.

"When you call the call center and say I have a ticket and I have no heat, you're told the ticket has been closed because service has been restored," he said.

DOI declined to comment, but a source familiar with the matter said the agency is looking specifically at Redfern.

On Tuesday, Barber and the other eight NYCHA tenant representatives of the City-wide Council of

Presidents released a statement saying they were "appalled by NYCHA's response to the recent issues with lack of heat and hot water at so many developments across New York City."

The group specifically cited allegations about NYCHA closing tickets without fixing the problem.

"We are even more horrified by NYCHA's disingenuous behavior with regard to falsely 'closing tickets' when no heat repairs were done," they wrote. "There are no standards and policies for oversight of followup to make sure that NYCHA is actually making any repairs and fixing the issues."

NYCHA spokeswoman Jasmine Blake confirmed NYCHA does not check every apartment after re-

setting a boiler, and said it was "critical" for tenants still without heat to put in new tickets.

"Everything NYCHA does is through our mission to provide residents safe, clean and connected communities. Staff is working 24/7 through the most extreme cold period in over 50 years to maintain heat for all 400,000 residents," Blake said. "Despite all of our efforts, we have fallen short and must do better."

Meanwhile, angry NYCHA tenants in Brooklyn took to the streets to protest the cold radiators that left them shivering in their homes during the arctic blast.

The demonstrators, mostly senior citizens, blamed old boilers for the heating problems that left thousands of tenants feeling like Popsicles during the city's worst cold spell in decades. With chants of "Turn on the heat! And keep it on," frustrated residents outside the Vandalia Senior Center in East New York made it clear that the fire in their bellies was not enough to keep them warm.



TODD MAISEL, DAILY NEWS