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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES MEASURES TO BETTER CONTROL RODENTS IN CHICAGO

DSS to Add 10 New Rodent Control Crews, Create an Interagency Rodent Task Force

The Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS) today announced measures designed to better control rodents in Chicago, including the creation of a new Rodent Task Force and the addition of 10 new crews to the Bureau of Rodent Control. The new crews – which have nearly doubled over the last two years – will ensure all requests are addressed within five days of receipt.

“To improve the quality of life of our residents, I’ve directed the Department to take important, preventive steps to help eliminate rodent problems in Chicago neighborhoods,” said Mayor Emanuel. “These measures will promote efficiency so that the City will be able to more quickly respond to requests from residents and, perhaps more importantly, eliminate the potential for problems before they become problems for residents.”

The new crews are in addition to the five crews the City redirected to Rodent Control in 2015. As a result of those expanded resources, DSS has been able to complete 75 percent more rodent abatement during the first quarter of this year over last year; increase preventive baiting by 80 percent; and begin working toward the goal of ensuring all requests are addressed within five days of receipt.

“Historically, Rodent Control had been a complaint driven Bureau. Under the leadership of Mayor Emanuel we have taken a much more proactive approach to fighting rodents. Through inspections, baiting, sanitation and public education, the City works hard to tackle the issue. And the additional crews will further enhance our efforts,” said DSS Commissioner Charles L. Williams.

At the request of the Mayor, the Department also announced the creation of a new Rodent Task Force. The Task Force will be comprised of various city departments and sister agencies that will work together to more strategically tackle the issue of rodents throughout Chicago. The Task Force will implement coordinated abatements, enforce new construction pre-baiting and identify additional resources to assist high complaint areas.

"This is a compliment to the ordinance we passed in January 2015 establishing more stringent abatement standards for developers. With major construction ramping up in the 43rd Ward and across Chicago this Spring, a comprehensive aggressive approach is welcome news for residents," said 43rd Ward Alderman Michele Smith.

In 2015, DSS also began implementation of the "New Construction Site - Rodent Abatement Ordinance" that mandates a rodent abatement plan be maintained throughout the excavation process of any new construction within City limits. These efforts will continue in 2016.

Public education is also another tool DSS will be using in 2016 to help combat rodents, and the outreach will focus on residents becoming a part of the solution. The DSS Neighborhood Outreach Team will attend community meetings to provide tips to combat rodents; work with businesses to address overflowing dumpsters, junk piles and overgrown weeds; and provide information to residents on how they can help eliminate the food sources in the area.

"The City takes an aggressive approach to rodent control. But we need residents to help. Even one yard with a food source or hiding place can cause a problem for an entire block. By working together to find and correct these food sources, we can be more successful in our efforts combat rodents," said Williams.

Other City agencies are also working to combat rodents. In 2015, the CTA began a pilot test of a new approach to rat abatement: an oral bait that targets the fertility of both male and female rats. The product—safe for humans, other animals and the environment—is formulated solely for rats. Though the results of the pilot test at two CTA locations are still being analyzed, preliminary results indicate that the product has been successful in slowing rodent reproduction and reducing the overall rodent population and activity. CTA will continue to analyze the survey results and look for opportunities for further use of the product.

Tips residents can use to help eliminate food sources include:

- Keeping garbage contained within closed carts, bins or dumpsters
- Cleaning up after pets and making sure waste is disposed in sealed containers
- Not leaving uncovered pet food outdoors
- Removing old tires, lumber or other debris piles
- Weeding and throwing away rotting fruits and vegetables from gardens
- Maintaining bird feeders

In addition to rodent abatement, the City of Chicago provides a variety of preventive services like replacing damaged garbage carts; demolishing dilapidated garages or sheds and attending community meetings to provide tips to combat rodents.

DSS' efforts to reduce Rodent Control response time from seven days to five days builds on the department's ongoing efforts to increase efficiency, and therefore reducing response times by:

- redirecting an additional 10 tree trim crews in forestry, increasing the department's trim productivity by 2,000 trims per month, a nearly 30 percent increase in trim work (barring extreme weather) each month.

- continuing to utilize crews dedicated to implementing the strategic grid-based graffiti removal system that addresses outstanding calls in targeted geographic areas in each ward, which has dramatically reduced response times from 10 days to fewer than three days.

For more information on rodent control services, call 311 or visit www.cityofchicago/DSS.

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