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**HOW
SAFE
ARE OUR
SALONS**



N.Y. cracks down
on unsanitary
practices

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In the 12 years Basil Konstantinidis has run NY Jungle salon in Tappan, he's only been inspected twice by the state. "Their biggest issue was to make sure the salon had a license and that our pictures were on the licenses," said Konstantinidis, noting that sanitary conditions didn't seem so important. "He didn't walk through the salon."

Many more barbershops, spas, and hair and nail salons

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ON THE WEB

To see copies of a recent New York City report on nail salons and the salon inspection form used by state inspectors, log on to lohud.com

Salons

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will be getting surprise visits from state inspectors this year. New York began an inspection blitz statewide with the goal of visiting a quarter of all appearance-enhancement businesses it regulates by the end of 2015.

By early December, the state inspected 403 of the 1,538 licensed appearance-enhancement businesses in Putnam, Rockland and Westchester counties.

The Lower Hudson Valley's blitz began around November; before October, the state had only inspected four salons in the region, according to state data obtained by The Journal News through a Freedom of Information Law request.

The blitz contrasts with the recent past, when very few of the region's salons were inspected by the state's 27 inspectors. In 2013, fewer than 90 salons in the region were visited by inspectors from the Department of State's Licensing Enforcement Unit, and there were virtually no inspections in 2012.

Department of State spokesman Laz Benitez said his agency inspects the different licensed entities it oversees in different years, so in 2015 it will focus on appearance-enhancement licensees.

Even though the state recently inspected 403 local beauty businesses, don't ask who got the biggest fines. The state's unwieldy record keeping doesn't allow officials to easily identify the biggest offenders.

Benitez explained that his office would have to look through individual files because information on salon fines or penalties aren't indexed or searchable in the state's computers.

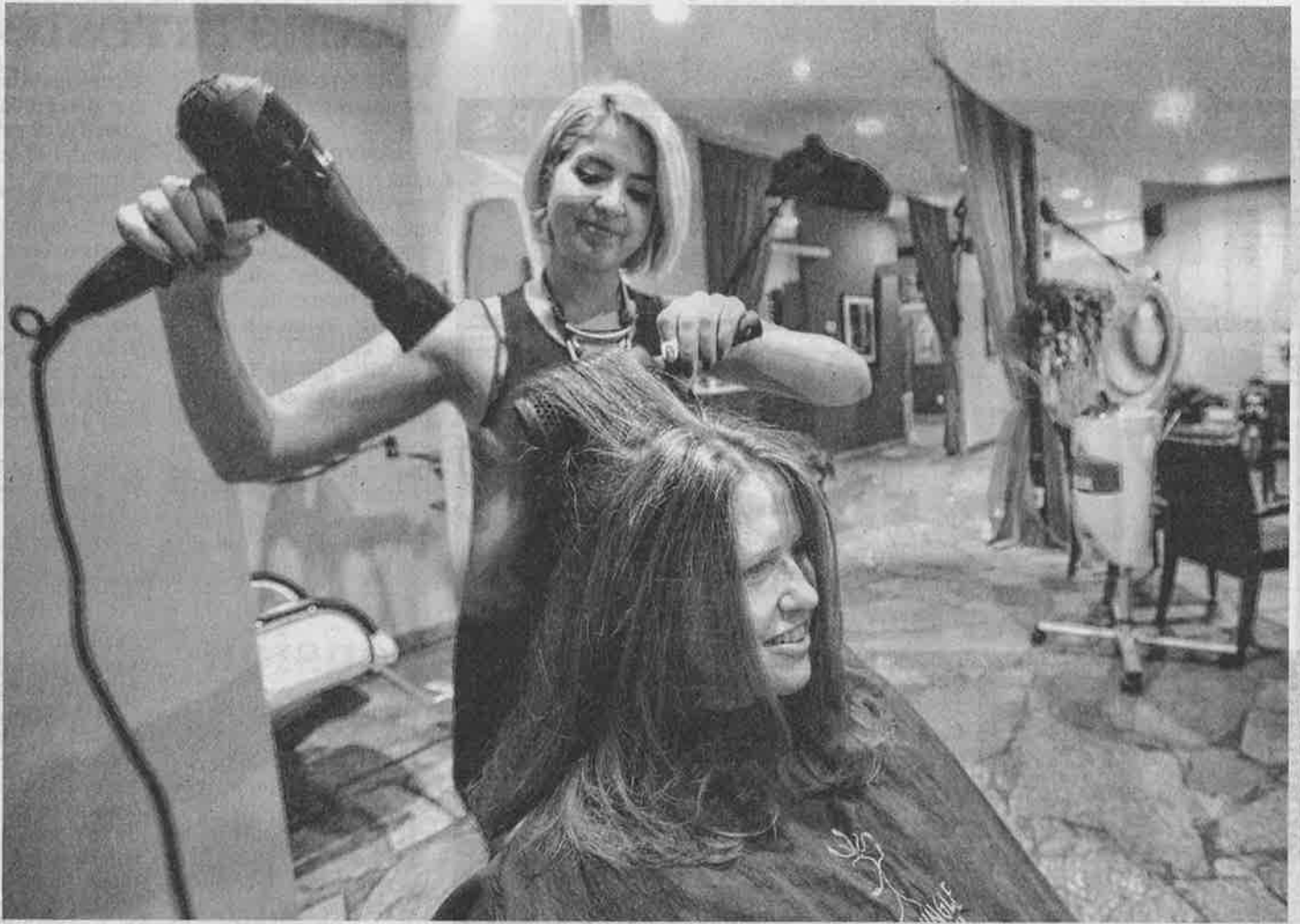
It's also unclear how high a priority sanitary conditions will be during the inspection blitz.

"I don't ever remember anyone saying the state inspector came in and we didn't have enough sanitizing solutions for our combs," said Anthony Civitano, executive director of the New York State Beauty School Association and owner of the Hair Design Institute in New York City.

Sanitary conditions at beauty parlors became an issue in September after New York City Public Advocate Letitia James proposed that the city take over inspections of nail salons to ensure greater sanitary and workplace health compliance.

Josephine Ma, owner of Belle Visage Nail Salon in Mount Kisco, said inspectors came to her business in November and checked her licenses, insurance, disinfecting solution order forms and autoclave (a pressure chamber used to sterilize nail tools with super-heated steam). The visit was only the second time inspectors visited her in the 10 years her business has been open.

State inspectors are supposed to look for sanitary compliance. The state's inspection forms include check boxes for disinfectants, reprocessing of instruments and general sanitation.



Alyssa "Rae" Marucci helps customer Tara Loy of Pearl River look her best at the NY Jungle salon in Tappan. Many more barbershops, spas, and nail and hair salons will be getting surprise visits from state inspectors this year. PETER CARR/THE JOURNAL NEWS



Basil Konstantinidis uses a brush sanitizer at his salon, NY Jungle. He says the salon has been inspected just twice in the past 12 years, and he welcomes more inspections. PETER CARR/THE JOURNAL NEWS



Josephine Ma of Belle Visage Nail Salon in Mount Kisco holds a sterilization pouch. JOE LARESE/THE JOURNAL NEWS

Properly disinfecting combs, brushes, electric razors and manicure tools is important to prevent the spread of lice and infections like Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, commonly known as MRSA.

Dr. Amy Newburger, a dermatologist with WESTMED in Scarsdale, said it's best to visit a hair or nail salon before booking an appointment. In fact, it's something she does routinely herself.

"I just explain that I really would like to see how they keep their instruments clean," said Newburger. "What I generally say is that I'm prone to these infections, and I'm trying to avoid them. So I ask how they clean and if they prefer that I bring my own instruments, and I take a look."

Ma sells instruments to customers who want their own and she stores them in her shop, though most of her customers don't ask for a personal kit. For pedicures, Ma said she washes foot baths with antibacterial soap after each use and then with bleach at the end of the day.

Stony Point resident Toni Delcioppio has patronized NY Jungle at 15 Route 303 for about 10 years, and before that she left salons that she considered dirty or cluttered.

Delcioppio, 57, never considered asking a salon about its license, but she's conscious of bathrooms, floors and how much cut hair is lying about.

"It's beautiful," Delcioppio said of NY Jungle. "Everything is so organized, all the products, so I was very comfortable. As soon as I walked in here I felt that this was going to be my place."

Konstantinidis said his staff is very conscious of sanitary issues.

"We don't use the same brush from one client to another. Those things are taken back and sanitized and cleaned," he said.

For manicure tools, NY Jungle dips tools in sanitizing liquid and then places them in an ultraviolet light box for additional disinfecting.

NY Jungle staff sprays electric clippers with disinfectant, and capes and towels are laundered in an in-house washer-dryer after each use.

Even if a salon is in gross violation of rules, inspectors don't have the power to shut down rogue or unlicensed businesses. Operating a salon without a license is a misdemeanor under state law, but inspectors can only recommend to salon owners that they get licensed.

In the event that an establishment still doesn't get licensed, the Department of State can refer the matter to the local district attorney's office or to the state attorney general, said Benitez.

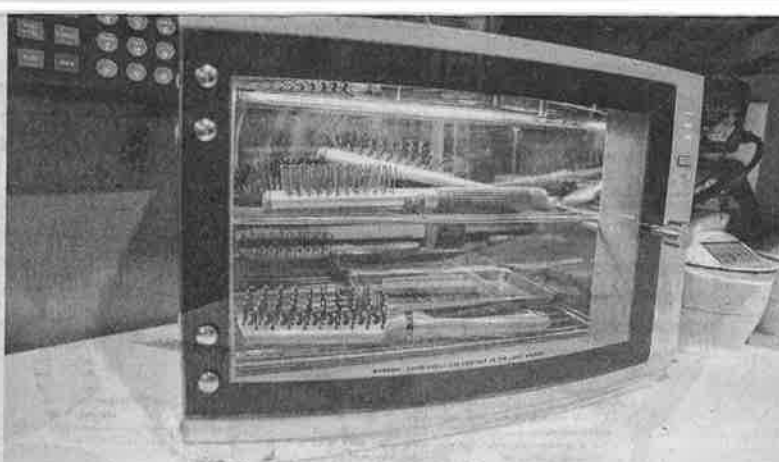
Staff writer Linda Lombroso contributed to this report.

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JOE LARESE/THE JOURNAL NEWS

Disinfectant is used to sterilize tools at Belle Visage.



PETER CARR/THE JOURNAL NEWS

This sanitizer at NY Jungle uses ultraviolet light to disinfect brushes.

Salon tips

The New York City Public Advocate's Office offers consumers the following nail salon tips:

- » Observe the salon for cleanliness.
- » Ensure pedicure stations are clean.
- » If you notice strong chemical smells, find another salon.
- » Nail technicians should not pull tools from their pockets. They

should be sterilized first.

To file a complaint, contact the Department of State at 212-417-5747 or www.dos.ny.gov

Beware of the nasty stuff at salons

Proper cleaning practices key to avoiding infections

LINDA LOMBROSO
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You'd like to think you're in good hands when you visit the hair or nail salon. But even the fanciest spa can leave you with an infection if staffers aren't scrupulous about cleanliness.

Dr. Amy Newburger, a dermatologist with WESTMED in Scarsdale, has seen all sorts of salon-induced problems in her practice, including bacterial, fungal and yeast infections, and head lice — which can indeed survive in those hair-filled brushes.

Electric hair clippers that aren't properly cleaned can transmit impetigo, a bacterial infection, and ringworm, a fungal infection. Dirty cuticle nippers can lead to a case of onycholysis, a condition in which the nail separates from the nail bed. And footbaths can give you the last person's toenail fungus, a stubborn condition that generally requires oral medication, said Newburger.



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Dr. Amy Newburger, a dermatologist with WESTMED in Scarsdale, has seen patients with infections acquired from salons.

The best approach is to bring your own tools from home, and to make sure the salon disinfects and sterilizes the equipment you will be using, she said.

Don't be afraid to ask a salon or spa about their cleaning practices — and don't worry if they think you're weird for asking, said Newburger, who offered these additional tips:

» Make sure electric hair clippers are taken apart in between clients, and thoroughly cleaned.

"You want to get off any type of biologic material that might be stuck on the tool, and then you have to sterilize it," she said. "What's benign in one person is not benign in the next."

If you use electric clippers on family members at home, you can sterilize them

in a 275-degree oven for 20 minutes. The heat will kill viruses and spores of bacteria and fungi, while retaining the clippers' sharp edges.

» Tools used for manicures and pedicures should have debris removed before they're placed in a machine that kills germs. Newburger's favorite is the autoclave, a more expensive device that uses high heat and pressure to sterilize equipment.

» Look for a salon that uses footbaths that can be drained fully in between clients. Ask what time of day they clean the footbath, and try to be the first appointment after they've used the disinfectant.

» Don't shave your legs before a pedicure.

"When you shave, you're making microscopic cuts in the skin, which allows more microbes to get in," said Newburger.

» See a doctor if you develop a scalp or nail infection; many conditions look similar and require proper diagnosis for the right treatment. Ringworm is often mistaken for psoriasis or seborrhea, said Newburger. A yeast infection of the fingers can also mimic other conditions.

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Teens arrested for tweet