

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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June 20, 2018

Start: 1:06 p.m.

Recess: 1:44 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: JOSEPH C. BORELLI
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Alicka Ampry-Samuel
Justin L. Brannan
Fernando Cabrera
Alana N. Maisel

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Joe Esposito, Commissioner
New York City Emergency Management

Anthony DeVita, Assistant Chief of Operations
New York City Fire Department

Fred Vallani, Assistant Chief of EMS
New York City Fire Department

Meg Pribram, Assistant Commissioner of Planning and
Preparedness, NYC Office Emergency Management

Christina Farrell, Deputy Commissioner, External
Affairs, NYC Office Emergency Management

2 [sound check] [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Good afternoon.

4 I'm Council Member Joe Borelli. I'm Chair of the
5 Committee on Fire and Emergency Management, and I'm
6 joined by my colleagues Council Member Maisel who is
7 the only person who decided to join me on this lovely
8 day thus far. The Committee on Fire and Emergency
9 Management primarily oversees the New York City Fire
10 Department and the city's Emergency Medical Services,
11 which are principally responsible for firefighting as
12 well as maintain first responder medical services.
13 The Committee also oversees the Office of Emergency
14 Management, which is responsible for coordinating the
15 New York City's emergency planning and response for
16 all types and scales of emergencies including coastal
17 storms. Regarding the subject of today's oversight
18 hearings, we are here to discuss the city's emergency
19 planning for coastal storms. Both the FDNY and OEM
20 played a critical role in leading the city's response
21 to natural disasters such as tropical storms and
22 coastal floods. During largescale emergencies, the
23 city employs a Citywide Incident Management System or
24 CIMS, which guides interagency coordination and
25 streamlines the process for delivering vital services

1 to New Yorkers in need of assistance. Additionally,
2 OEM is responsible for development and coordination
3 of the city's Coastal Storm Plan, CSP which provides
4 detailed planning for potential evacuation,
5 sheltering and other steps necessary to prepare for
6 potential flooding that results from coastal storms.
7 In doing so, OEM works in consultation with the
8 National Weather Service to ensure that information
9 is disseminated to the public and people are advised
10 of accordingly, and it ensures safety during coast
11 storms. As we all know, our city experienced the
12 devastating effects of Super Storm Sandy in 2012.
13 During the city's recovery and rebuilding efforts
14 from the deadly storm, we learned how to better
15 collective prepare for natural disasters of that
16 magnitude, which include how to best address the
17 storm surge and coastal flooding. Today, the
18 committee will examine several areas including OEM's
19 plan for coastal storms and hurricanes, how the city
20 communicates with the public prior to, during and
21 after major coastal storms, the FDNY's preparation
22 and response capabilities during a coastal storm, and
23 during evacuation protocols set forth by OEM during
24 large scale incidents. We look forward to hearing
25

2 the testimony from the Administration about these
3 vital efforts and examine the detailed planning that
4 is taken to ensure that all New Yorkers remain safe
5 in the times of coastal flood emergencies.

6 Additionally, we are also hearing a completely
7 unrelated but important piece of legislation in
8 today's hearing especially if you enjoy smoking
9 cigars in your back yard. Proposed Intro 13-A
10 sponsored by myself and Council Member Brannan aims
11 to remove the current restrictions on the use of
12 residential fire pits. These commercially sold
13 products, sold at hardware stores throughout New York
14 City, will be enjoyed by Countless New Yorkers this
15 summer for making back yards Smores or adding to the
16 ambience of an evening barbecue. However, local
17 restrictions make such an operation prohibited
18 despite the many safety features that are currently
19 included in all commercial miles to minimize the risk
20 proposed by an open fire. I look forward to hearing
21 testimony from the Fire Department regarding how we
22 could ensure that people are able to safety and
23 legally enjoy fire pits in their back yard along with
24 cocktails and cigars. I now would like to ask those
25 members of the Administration who plan to testify to

2 please state your name for the record and to raise
3 your right hands as the Committee counsel administers
4 the oath.

5 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: I'm Joe Esposito,
6 Commissioner of New York City Emergency Management.

7 ASSISTANT CHIEF DEVITA: Anthony—oh
8 sorry. Thanks, Joe. Anthony DeVita, Assistant Chief
9 of Operations, Fire Department.

10 FRED VALLANI: Fred Vallani, Assistant
11 Chief of EMS, Fire Depart.

12 ASSISTANT PRIBRAM: Meg Pribram,
13 Assistant Commissioner of Planning and Preparedness,
14 OEM.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Christina
16 Farrell, Deputy Commissioner, External Affairs.

17 LEGAL COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the
18 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in
19 your testimony before this committee, and to respond
20 honestly to Council Member Questions?

21 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: I do.

22 ASSISTANT CHIEF DEVITA: I do.

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: We'll start with
24 the Commissioner, please.

2 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Okay, thank you
3 very much. Good afternoon, Chairperson Borelli and
4 members of the Committee. I'm Joe Esposito
5 Commissioner of New York City Department of Emergency
6 Management, and I'm here and I'm please to provide
7 information on the work that that the city has done
8 to plan for coastal storms. Let me begin by
9 discussing how the agency coordinates planning
10 efforts. As we all know, every emergency can create
11 new and unforeseen conditions. Emergency Management
12 is responsible for the development, maintenance, and
13 oversight of over 40 emergency plans for a range of
14 natural and manmade hazards with a focus on citywide
15 coordination and cooperation and operations. These
16 plans include coordinator roles and responsibilities
17 of key stakeholders for these events primarily city
18 agencies. Plans may also include citywide objectives
19 for managing the incident, logistical resource needs
20 and operations, templates for emergency agency-for
21 interagency coordination and data management, and
22 checklists for key tasks and actions. Plans are
23 either operational specific or such as debris
24 management or hazard specific such as the New York
25 City culture storm plan. Coastal storms including

2 nor'easters and hurricanes are not really weather
3 events. They are highly destructive forces of nature
4 that bring multiple hazards including violent winds,
5 tornadoes, powerful waves, torrential rains and
6 dangerous storm surge. The city's coastal storm plan
7 is made of up of eight scalable stand-alone plans. It
8 includes storm tracking, evacuation and sheltering,
9 communications and public information, logistical
10 operations, commodities distribution, debris
11 management and recovery and restoration. Every city
12 agency and many state and federal agencies including
13 the military are involved in all aspects of the
14 Coastal Storm Plan, drafting and updating them,
15 training on and exercising them and, of course,
16 activating them when necessary. New York City
17 continuously monitors weather in consultation with
18 the National Weather service, and we rely on these
19 predictions to make important decisions. These
20 decisions can be costly and have potential to affect
21 many New Yorkers. None more so than the decision for
22 the Mayor to issue a mandatory evacuation order.
23 Zones must be evacuated well before the storm
24 arrives, and we have time tables set up for that.
25 Before Hurricane Sandy, the city had three hurricane

2 evacuation zones. In 2013, the city revised and
3 expanded its hurricane evacuation zones to divide the
4 city into six numbered zones based on the risk of
5 storm surge flooding. Each zone has less residents
6 and it's prepared to the previous system, which
7 provides decision makers greater flexibility in
8 determining the proper extent of an evacuation order.
9 Roughly thee million New Yorkers are living within
10 the city's hurricane evacuation zones. While we
11 recommend that people who need to evacuate try to
12 stay with family or friends, the city will open safe,
13 secure and supplied shelters throughout the five
14 boroughs staffed by city employees and many, many
15 volunteers. Individuals with special medical needs
16 may not require hospitalization or nursing home care,
17 but they need more care than can be provided at a
18 hurricane shelter. For people unable to--yeah, for
19 people who require this additional level of care, the
20 city will also open up special medical needs
21 shelters. Those unable to evacuate on their own can
22 call 311 to get assistance evacuating to a city
23 shelter. To provide information for those with
24 disabilities access of functional needs, the Advanced
25 Warning System will be used. This system is a robust

1 tool that provides real time incident specific
2 information throughout-through service providers with
3 pre-established trusted relationships. Over 1,800
4 service providers representing hundreds of thousands
5 of clients transmit information to the-to their
6 clients that is revised and customized for their
7 specific needs empowering them to act in a way that
8 is most appropriate for them. This timely targeted
9 and specific evacuation information includes details
10 about evacuation assistance. The emergency supply
11 stockpile consists of more than 6,000 pallets of
12 material and supplies all shelters as well as
13 commodity distribution points. They consist of
14 durable and over-the-counter medical supplies,
15 personal care items, cots, blankets, food, water,
16 baby and vet supplies-pet supplies. It is designed to
17 support the basic needs of 70,000 people who are
18 sheltered up to seven days. Supplies are ready for
19 deployment in 48 hours to shelters at distributing
20 points throughout the city. Public information and
21 outreach is key. After Hurricane Sandy, New York
22 City Emergency Management launched the Know Your Zone
23 Campaign, which encourages New Yorkers to find out if
24 they live in one of the city's hurricane evacuation
25

2 zones, the hazards that they may face, and the steps
3 to take to be prepared. We expanded our outreach
4 efforts on resident hurricane evacuation zones
5 providing hundreds of presentations annually in
6 hurricane evacuation zones and mailing hurricane
7 guides to New York City residents and businesses in
8 all the city's hurricane evacuation zones. We also
9 have run ads, and created videos that are currently
10 running and will run throughout the coastal storm
11 season. Through innovative partnerships with the
12 city's public, private and non-profit sectors
13 successful projects that CERT, direct community and
14 elected official engagement and extensive use of new
15 media, our outreach efforts have reached millions of
16 people. Notify New York City, the city's free
17 emergency notification system has grown significantly
18 since Hurricane Sandy, and now boasts more than
19 734,000 subscribers and has expanded to offer common
20 notifications in 13 languages, American sign language
21 and audio formats. We launched a new mobile
22 application this year that have seen more than 68,000
23 downloads. In the aftermath of Sandy, the city set
24 up services to support residents throughout the five
25 boroughs and out line needs to support community

2 recovery and resilience throughout several
3 initiatives such as the Share Your Space Program,
4 which identifies spaces in communities that could be-
5 potentially support the city's emergency recovery
6 operations will be used for community outreach
7 events. We have the Community Emergency Planning and
8 New York City Toolkit, an interactive workbook
9 designed to guide communities through developing
10 their own emergency plans. Not only does it provide
11 the hazards these communities may face such as
12 hurricanes or utility disruptions, it also outlines
13 the key responsible role communities can play to
14 protect their residents and organizations. We had
15 the High Watermark Initiative, a program that
16 increases local communities' awareness of flood
17 risks. High watermark signs are posted throughout
18 the Five Boroughs noting the level of storm surge in
19 these locations that occurred during Hurricane Sandy.
20 All of this planning requires testing to make sure it
21 is operational, usable and ready to go. We have a
22 robust training and exercise program to build the
23 capacity to have met the plan. We have—we provide a
24 variety of training courses both online and classroom
25 training. More than 20,000 people have taken a

hurricane shelter training, which targets the role that the city employees play in supporting our sheltering operations. Participants in these training courses range from city employees to private sector and non-profit partners. Our Community Emergency Response Team are certain volunteers. New York City Emergency Management hosts annual exercises aimed at preparing New York City personnel and supporting coastal storm operations. These exercises including City Hall executives and agency commissioner with the goal of rehearsing critical decision making during the coastal storm. Previous exercises have focused on evacuations, shelter, and school closure decision making. Our coastal storm plan is vast and incredibly comprehensive. This is just a very small snapshot of the massive planning, testing and training we have done to prepare the city for the coast storms. We are happy to come to any of the City Council districts in-in the city to discuss the specifics of their coastal storm preparation in that area, and my team does this on a regular basis. We will continue to build our hurricane preparedness and to bring to bear the best thinking and resources to the benefit of New York City. The City Council

2 has been a great partner to us in encouraging people
3 to sign up on Notify NYC ensuring their constituents
4 know their zones and assisting us in passing on
5 timely and important information during emergencies.
6 Thank you for joining us in our mission to support
7 the preparedness of New Yorkers and thank you for
8 your time here today, and we're happy to answer any
9 questions.

10 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you very
11 much, Commissioner. Does anyone else have a
12 statement? Oh, sorry.

13 ASSISTANT CHIEF DEVITA: Good afternoon,
14 Chair Borelli and all the Council Members present.
15 My name is Anthony DeVita, and I'm Assistant Chief of
16 Operations at the New York City Fire Department.
17 Thank you for the opportunity to speak with today
18 about the Fire Department's emergency planning for
19 coastal storms. In addition to our partners at the
20 New York City Emergency Management, I am joined this
21 morning by Assistant Chief Fred Vallani of EMS
22 Operations. The Fire Department puts a great deal of
23 thought into planning for coastal storms and
24 hurricanes. Hurricanes and severe storms can
25 significantly disrupt normal fire operations. Such

2 storms may be accompanied by flooding, damaging
3 winds, and storm surge. Depending on the size,
4 strength and track of the storm, large coastal and
5 inland areas of the city can flood, which means that
6 the Fire Department at least in those areas will be
7 faced with increased call volume, civilian
8 evacuation, restricted access to response areas and
9 the possible evacuation of FDNY quarters. We plan to
10 conduct—we plan to conduct drills and establish
11 protocols to ensure that the department can effectively
12 prepare for and react and be proactive as the
13 hurricane is predicted to impact New York City. We
14 also anticipate the ways in which a storm will impact
15 our response to emergencies. Roads may become
16 blocked by flooding or trees and debris. Apparatus
17 may be negatively affected including
18 punctured tires, engine failure, electrical issues
19 and adverse effects and the adverse effects of salt
20 water. We may even face the effects of civil unrest
21 or opportunistic terrorism. In order to meet these
22 challenges, the department engages in intense
23 planning at every level for operating during a major
24 coastal storm. Senior leadership takes steps to
25 increase staffing and activate additional resources

1 including working with our partners at New York City
2 Emergency Management. In addition, firefighter
3 transport teams are activated to support the
4 Homebound Evacuation Program. We also ensure that
5 adequate procedures are placed to secure sufficient
6 fuel for apparatus and emergency generators. We
7 coordinate with fellow city agencies at the
8 appropriate level of command to determine resources
9 available during a storm. This may include for
10 example coordinating with the NYPD regarding street
11 closures, and traffic diversion, coordinating with
12 the Department of Parks and Recreation regarding tree
13 removal, and conducting—coordinating with the New
14 Yorkers National Guard and the United States Coast
15 Guard to name but a few. FDNY divisions, battalions
16 and units compile lists of streets that are subject
17 to flooding and could become impassable. Surveys are
18 made to identify high ground locations within
19 affected areas where apparatus can be staged before
20 the area becomes isolated. They also survey
21 locations and conditions of institutional occupancies
22 such as hospitals, nursing homes and correctional
23 facilities. Where necessary, pre-planned procedures
24 for these locations are developed and evaluated
25

1 during training and drills. Units also maintain a
2 list of hydrants located in their administrative area
3 that are prone to become submerged during a storm.
4 We've taken measures to protect our facilities that
5 are most vulnerable to flooding including so in flood
6 barriers, and currently have mitigation projects
7 underway at a number of such facilities that will
8 involve raising electrical and communication
9 equipment above flowing levels and installing
10 generators on elevated platforms. EMS has the
11 ability to employ EMS station relocation trailers,
12 which allow the department to relocate the essential
13 components of an EMS station. Units also take steps
14 to cover and protect exposed equipment and ensure
15 that reserve apparatus are properly equipped and
16 serviceable. FDNY facilities are prepared for a
17 sever weather using checklist of supplies and
18 equipment that is procured in advance of the start of
19 the hurricane season. Members ensure department
20 property is stored to minimize the risk of water
21 damage and appropriate warnings are posted in areas
22 that become hazardous if flooded such as electrical
23 panes and appliances. A determination it made as to
24 whether fuel tanks should in quota should be drained
25

2 if expected to be affected by the flood water.

3 Companies in areas prone to flooding plan for the
4 potential to be relocated to host companies and
5 ensure that appropriate preparations are made to
6 accommodate them. Using assessment of the storm and
7 weather forecasts, senior operations leadership will
8 determine the need for increased staffing and
9 alternate scheduling. The Bureau of EMS may
10 institute longer tours, and the Bureau of Fire
11 Operations may allow flexible staffing to increase
12 personal-personnel availability. We have the ability
13 to increase staffing at both PSAC1 and PSAC2, our
14 communication centers to handle greater call volume.
15 It still may still also impact the type of equipment
16 that the department uses during operations. Rescue
17 squads in cold water rescue units are equipped with
18 life preservers and cold water rescue suits. The
19 department will use high axle vehicles to transport
20 personnel and equipment to areas that have been
21 flooded and these high axle vehicles will be used to
22 conduct evacuations and rescue and patient-patient
23 extraction in places that become difficult to access.
24 Special Operations Personnel may deploy marine
25 resources such as waiters, rafts and a variety of

boats. We've also secured federal grant money to enhance our capabilities and resilience through major storms. We've trained and equipped a number of specialized teams to rescue victims in flooded areas including ten swift water teams, and urban search and rescue teams. We've purchased Zodiac boats, flood rescue boats, high angle-high axle vehicles, and dewatering equipment. We continue holding ongoing training and drills to practice responding to-during a major storm covering flood rescue ops and incident management. FDNY also mobilizes its Incident Management Team for managing department operations pre and post storm and supporting the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene with its Post-Emergency Canvassing Operation known as the PECO. During the storm itself, unit deployment is adjusted on an evolving basis to ensure that all-all the department is able to perform at the highest levels possible. All requests for information directives and orders are channeled through department leadership at the Fire Department Operation Center, the borough command level and in-and to field units. Reports on weather conditions and other pertinent information are transmitted via the Fire Department Operation Center

1 to the Bureau of Communications and as necessary to
2 units on the ground. Department Mobile Command
3 Centers may be deployed to areas of the city that may
4 have become isolated. Throughout the storm, the
5 department remains in close contact with various
6 agencies for continuing reports on weather and ground
7 conditions. Senior leadership will also develop
8 messages for transmission to public media by the Fire
9 Department's Office of Public Information, OPI. OPI
10 conveys safety messages and updates to various news
11 media and radio stations. During extreme weather,
12 OPI will work with local media to seek assistance
13 reaching viewers, readers, and listeners with
14 critical messages such as shutting off utilities or
15 evacuating an area. The department may also request
16 that media outlets transmit news for emergency
17 personnel such as notifying off duty personnel of an
18 imminent recall. OPI uses its significant social
19 media reach for these tasks as well. Hill units are
20 responsible for being aware of the flooding
21 conditions in their response areas, and they make
22 surveys to determine developing conditions including
23 the status of main arteries that have become
24 impassible, response areas that are flooded, location
25

1 of downed trees, fallen live wires and submerge—and
2 submerged vehicles, and where the relocation of the
3 unit may become necessary. These developments are
4 transmitted up the chain of command so that storm-
5 specific procedures can be developed and adjusted as
6 necessary. FDNY also plays a key role in preparation
7 for the evacuation of medical facilities. In advance
8 of evacuation order, FDNY members serving medical
9 facilities to touch base with facility incident
10 managers, review evacuation procedures and gather
11 information to forward to OEM and the State
12 Department of Health. FDNY also manages the
13 transportation section of the healthcare facility
14 evacuation center. We know that the dynamics of
15 hurricane have nearly limitless variables. No two
16 storms are alike, and variations in the size, speed,
17 track and location of the storms can lead to vastly
18 different operation conditions and outcomes.
19 Accordingly, FDNY members are highly skilled at
20 adapting to evolving events. Especially during
21 hurricanes flexibility is emphasized at all command
22 levels. Members are passionate about protecting the
23 life and property of New Yorkers and they will not
24 let a storm—not let storm conditions deter them from
25

2 fulfilling that mission, and that concludes my
3 section on the storm preparedness. I'm just going to
4 read—discussion Intro 13. Okay, Introduction 13.
5 This will would allow outdoor residential fire pits
6 consisting of a free-standing vessel that is not
7 designed for cooking in which a contained outdoor
8 fire is made from gas burners or from burning wood.
9 We have concern—concerns about this bill, but we
10 would like to continue discussing the idea with the
11 Council. Back yard wood burning fire pits generate
12 cinders in close proximity to combustible homes and
13 vegetation, and in particular we are concerned about
14 the enhanced potential for structural or brush fires.
15 There are some safety mechanisms that could help
16 mitigate these risks, but enforcement of those
17 measures presents a challenge. As drafted, this bill
18 would create an exception in the Emission Standards
19 Sub-Chapter Title 24 of the Administrative Code,
20 which covers environmental protection and utilities.
21 If we were able to find a solution, we believe that
22 the legislation should also address Title 29 the New
23 York City Fire Code, and that the Fire Department
24 should be able—that Fire Department should be able to
25 issue rules to guide the exemption including for

2 example to require the vessels be made of appropriate
3 fire proof material and that it must contain a spark
4 guard and/or screen. We look forward to further
5 discussions on this topic, and we would be happy to
6 take your questions at this time.

7 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you very
8 much, Chief. I just want to point out we're joined
9 by Council Member Brannan who is very excited to be
10 here, and he's having a lovely day. So, we'll skip-
11 we'll save 13-A for a few minutes, but if we could
12 start on some of the storm management things.

13 [background comments] I guess the first question is
14 a bit Staten Island specific since we have multiple
15 projects involving sea walls and storm surge
16 protection both in Tottenville and along the East
17 Shore where a sea wall will eventually be
18 constructed. When those systems are in place, will
19 that require OEM to alter the-the plan for storm
20 surges and flooding in that area?

21 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Well, that will
22 depend on if we redo the flood zones. You know, we
23 rely on FEMA to-to come up with the flood zones. I
24 mean design our evacuation zones based on that
25 information-some what on that information, but, you

2 know, OR is doing a lot of resilience and protecting
3 of the flood zones. We're also doing temporary--
4 Emergency Management is always doing some temporary
5 measures where you might have seen some sand bags
6 we're putting in, and tiger dams, but depending on
7 that, it may--it may need to adjust some of the zones.

8 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Can you explain,
9 Commissioner your interaction with hospitals and
10 nursing homes and adult care facilities how they
11 factor into the plan and--and what proactive steps the
12 agency takes.

13 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Sure. If an event
14 were to happen, we--we open up our Healthcare
15 Evacuation Center and the Chief mentioned that in his
16 statement. That would be run out of the--my--my shop,
17 Emergency Operate--my EOC, Emergency Operation Center
18 in--in my building, and in there you have Greater New
19 York. You have the Department of Health, you have
20 the State, all the agencies, Veterans Affairs are
21 there and--and we would deal with the--with the
22 facilities if they needed assistance. They have
23 plans. They're overseen by the state. The state
24 actually enforces and looks at their plans to make
25 sure they have plans, but we deal with the state on a

2 regular basis, and all of that would be coordinated
3 out of the—DHEC with the Healthcare Evacuation
4 Center. They have plans. They would put them in
5 place. We would address any needs that they—that
6 they had during that critical time, and again, that
7 would be hours before. You know, we have a certain
8 timeframe for when you have to evacuate. 48 hours
9 for the general public, 72 hours for facilities. So,
10 this would be in place well before the storm—the
11 storm came—before the storm hit—it hit the ground.

12 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And Chief DaVita,
13 this is a question that came up during a hearing a
14 couple of months ago about the Homebound Evacuation
15 Program. How are people identified for that, and—and
16 how is the agency—I guess just a little bit more
17 details on—the Homebound Evacuation Program how
18 that integrates with both storm management and just
19 in general response to other incidents?

20 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Chair Borelli, if
21 I may defer to Chief Vallani for—for that response.

22 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Sure.

23 ASSISTANT CHIEF VALLANI: So, the City's
24 Homebound Evacuation Program addresses the need of
25 evacuation for those people that are unable to

1 evacuate on their own or without the assistance of
2 family, friends, contractors, healthcare providers.
3 These are people who would be unable to evacuate from
4 an evacuation zone if we didn't offer that
5 assistance. They self-identify by dialing 311 and
6 ask for evacuation assistance. They are asked a
7 series of pre-determined questions by the operator at
8 311 that helps identify their—their level of
9 mobilization. If someone is able to ambulate to the
10 curb on their own, then a ride through Access-A-Ride
11 is arranged for them to an evacuation shelter. If a
12 person is identified as not being able to ambulate to
13 the curb for one reason or another, but they can sit
14 unassisted, usually somebody who utilizes a
15 wheelchair, then we arrange for pickup with
16 firefighter transport team to take them, their
17 durable medical equipment and caregiver to an
18 evacuation center. Those people who are unable to
19 ambulate to the curb, are unable to sit unassisted in
20 and are essentially bedridden, the call is switched
21 to 911 where an ambulance is dispatched to pick them
22 up and take them to a hospital that is outside of the
23 flood zone.
24

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And how many people
3 have signed up through 311? I-I guess the first part
4 of the question would be does 311 take these requests
5 just in posterity, you know, at all times leading up
6 to a storm or incident or is this just something that
7 you anticipate happening before an incident?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER VILLANI: This has
9 happened--this happens immediately before the
10 incident. There is no storage or--or taking of
11 information ahead of time. The information will be
12 stale. It might not be accurate at the time, and at
13 the time of the storm, someone needs to determine
14 whether they need assistance or they don't require
15 the assistance. So, at the time that an evacuation
16 order is issued or just before a time that an
17 evacuation is issued is when a person would self-
18 identify by calling 311. Their information would be
19 taken at that time, distributed as necessary.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, there is a
21 concern then that if-if the department wants to keep
22 a record of this that, you know, two years down the
23 road they would be sending some sort of a unit to a
24 location and the person might be moved or deceased or
25 whatever the case could be?

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER VILLANI:

3 Absolutely, the-the information would-would in all
4 likelihood not be accurate.

5 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And the-the final-
6 the final question I have on this and then I'm going
7 to turn to Intro 13, has FDNY ever exercised its
8 ability to expand the staffing level at PSAC before a
9 storm?

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER VILLANI: Yes. I
11 mean the short answer is yes.

12 ASSISTANT CHIEF DEVITA: Yes. No,
13 exactly. Yes, we have-we have, you know, obviously
14 both PSAC 1 and 2 up and running, currently up and
15 running and we do-we do have the ability and will
16 increase staffing at PSAC 1 and 2 in the event of a
17 coastal storm emergency.

18 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Councilman, just
19 going back to the vulnerable population. You know,
20 it would be very difficult to get one big list of
21 vulnerable, but we deal with a lot of agencies
22 private and public that maintain lists, the DOH, a
23 lot of the service providers, and we would call that
24 into play, and-and run those lists to try and reach
25 all of the people that are vulnerable, but again, as-

2 as the FD said, we'll be doing what he called a PECO,
3 which is Post-Evacuation Canvass. We're going to
4 knock on every door in those zones that were
5 evacuated. So, we think that's—that's maybe a bit of
6 a better strategy.

7 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And how long would
8 it take to mobilize a force to—to perform that
9 function?

10 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: We would go in
11 there as soon as it's safe. You have to—after—after
12 a storm, you've got to get the Building Department in
13 there, FD would go in and see that these buildings
14 are secured. Once—or safe to enter. Once that is
15 determined, they would able to go in. It's usually
16 24 to 48 hours we'd be knocking on those doors.

17 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, and then just
18 on Intro 13 [background comments, pause]. Can you
19 tell me, Chief, how often FDNY or 311 receives
20 complaints over fire pits? Is that something that
21 you have tracked?

22 ASSISTANT CHIEF DEVITA: Chair Borelli,
23 the Intro 13 as in the last—recently I've become
24 aware that this is being proposed, and I haven't run
25 statistics or run any numbers on how many of our—

2 reports of smoke in the area or structural fires, or
3 anything that related to a fire would be—have been
4 related to an outdoor fire pit. So, I could—I could
5 get back to you with any—any statistic that do lead—
6 lead us a to fire—leads to fire pits being the cause
7 any burn--

8 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: [interposing] Just
9 in your recollection—in your recollection just over
10 your career do you know of FDNY units giving
11 violations for fire pits.

12 ASSISTANT CHIEF DEVITA: Nobody knows.

13 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I mean so the good
14 news is what you mentioned about the emissions I
15 think we've addressed it in an A version of the bill
16 already. I guess just I'd like you to say just on
17 record just how nice it is to sit by a fire and enjoy
18 a cigar and a drink sometimes. [laughter]

19 ASSISTANT CHIEF DEVITA: Well, yes, I—I
20 don't live in the city. I do—I do have fire pit as a
21 matter of fact, and all those things you say are
22 true.

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Yes.

24 ASSISTANT CHIEF DEVITA: So, yes, of
25 course and agreed, but there are, of course, concerns

2 of, you know, the embers and just—just as we stated
3 and—but again, we're open to a conversation to—to
4 make sure that these inclement structures or pits are
5 safe and, you know, for the surrounding buildings and
6 for the people that are using them as well.

7 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: [interposing] Just—
8 just one—one last question on it, but a serious one,
9 and I know this out of experience because I've seen
10 it happen, do you know of units that have responded
11 to—to false alarms from neighbors that have smelled
12 smoke from these type of devices?

13 ASSISTANT CHIEF DEVITA: Again, none—none
14 that I'm aware of. Also, let me add as far as
15 accessing these back yard fire pits since we don't
16 have access to the back yards generally speaking, we,
17 you know, don't really have any data on—on it or are
18 able to enforce any kind of, you know, rules and
19 regulations based, just based on access to those
20 private areas.

21 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Can we both agree
22 that this might be something, though, that is good
23 for a certain density zones in the city but probably
24 isn't good for all density and zoning?

2 ASSISTANT CHIEF DEVITA: It's--again,
3 we're open to--open to discussion on--on the matter and
4 again, with--with safeguards in place, everything
5 could be as on the table for discussion.

6 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I'm going to pass
7 it over to Council Member Maisel because he was here
8 before you. He was here a long time.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: So, I have
10 seniority. This doesn't necessarily directly relate
11 to your testimony, but I was curious about are there
12 any operating fire boxes in the city at this time?

13 ASSISTANT CHIEF DEVITA: The alarm boxes
14 on the street corners?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Yeah.

16 ASSISTANT CHIEF DEVITA: Yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: There are some
18 that are--

19 ASSISTANT CHIEF DEVITA: It's about
20 thousands. I don't have the exact number, but
21 thousands. There's thousands that are working are
22 currently working and as--as far as we're concerned,
23 every one of them that is--is visible to the general
24 public is in service as we speak.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Because in my
3 district we have quite a number that are basically
4 they're decrepit and falling apart, and some of them
5 don't have the--the guts inside hem.

6 ASSISTANT CHIEF DEVITA: Right, those--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: [interposing]
8 They have been removed so people have been
9 complaining about these because they have become
10 eyesores.

11 ASSISTANT CHIEF DEVITA: Okay, if--if
12 you'd to get--supply me with a list of those, we could
13 look into whether they're in the process of being
14 repaired or in the process of being dismantled for
15 purposed of being moved.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: [interposing]
17 Okay, thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Then next is
19 Council member Brannan who joins me as a co-sponsor
20 of this bill.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Pumped up.
22 [laughter] Thank you guys. Commissioner, a question
23 about OEM's preparation and how you collaborate for
24 coastal storms. Like if I--if I'm figuring out if I
25 want to go to the beach this weekend, I'll just look

2 at the weather on Friday night or something. How
3 soon without giving up your special sauce, but how
4 soon or how often are you tracking storms so that you
5 are prepared? Like before you notify the public, how
6 soon before that are you guys already, you know,
7 ramping up to—to have everything ready that you need
8 to have ready?

9 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: We speak to the
10 National Weather Service at least twice a day, and
11 that's every day of the year, and not just during
12 storm season, and we get an update because weather is
13 weather. It could be—it doesn't have to be a
14 hurricane. It could be a snow storm, a wind event.
15 It could be anything. So, we talk to them at least
16 twice a day, and when necessary, we put out alerts to
17 the public. During storm season, we talk to them a
18 little more often, and we'll track those storms. We-
19 we get information from the National Weather Service
20 when those storms are off Africa's Coast, and we
21 track them hour by hour, day by day to see where
22 they're coming. So, we're in constant contact with
23 the National Weather Service.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Very cool. Thank
25 you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Well, thank you.
3 That's all the questions we have.

4 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: We're done?
5 Great. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, that
9 concludes our hearing for today. Thank you. [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date July 16, 2018