



September 17, 2018
Testimony of Elizabeth Cascio, Chief of Staff, FDNY
Oversight Hearing- EMS Response to Opioid Crisis

Good morning Chair Borelli and all Council Members present. My name is Elizabeth Cascio and I am Chief of Staff for Commissioner Nigro of the New York City Fire Department. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the Fire Department's response to the opioid crisis. I am joined by James Booth, Chief of EMS, Thomas McKavanagh, Chief of Fire Prevention, and Dr. Glenn Asaeda, the Medical Director for the Office of Medical Affairs.

Nationally, we are in the midst of a drug overdose epidemic driven by both prescription and illicit opioids, primarily heroin and fentanyl. In New York City, drug overdose is the leading cause of unintentional injury death for all New Yorkers, and the leading cause of death among New Yorkers aged 25 to 34.

In March 2017, the Mayor launched *HealingNYC*: a comprehensive response to the opioid overdose epidemic, which aims to save as many as 400 lives by 2022. One of the key goals of *HealingNYC* is to prevent opioid overdose deaths by distributing naloxone – a life-saving drug that can reverse opioid overdose – to communities and social networks where risk of drug overdose is highest.

The City has pledged to distribute 100,000 naloxone kits per year, free of charge, to ensure that people at highest risk of overdose, and their friends, families, and social networks are equipped to prevent an overdose death. The Fire Department's role in that plan is the Naloxone Leave Behind Program. My testimony will focus on FDNY's approach to and methods of dealing with suspected opioid overdoses.

As far back as the 1970s, EMS paramedics carried and administered naloxone to patients with suspected overdoses. At that time, it was not easy to administer. However, as the technology evolved and naloxone became easier to administer, the Department sought and received approval from New York State to allow emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and certified first responders (CFRs) to use naloxone to revive patients. As a result, all EMS personnel and CFR certified firefighters are able to administer the



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medication. FDNY EMTs and CFRs began administering naloxone in 2014. Our most recent advancement, announced in June of this year, has been “Leave Behind” naloxone kits, which I will discuss in detail later in my testimony.

When EMTs, paramedics, or CFRs encounter a patient whom they believe may have overdosed, they use their training and experience to make a decision about whether to administer naloxone. It’s not practical or possible for them to conduct a blood test in the field, so they treat a patient for a suspected overdose based on several factors, including physical symptoms such as pinpoint pupils, credible information from a friend or witness, and the presence of drug paraphernalia. Upon determining that the patient may be overdosing on an opioid, naloxone will be administered like a nasal spray, to revive and improve the patient’s breathing. Subsequently, the patient will be transported to a hospital or medical center emergency room.

Overdoses caused by stronger narcotics may require additional doses of naloxone. One trend that we have seen in recent years is overdoses caused by heroin contaminated with fentanyl. Fentanyl is a pain reliever that is 50-100 times more potent than morphine. We are aware of instances in other parts of the country of narcotics being mixed with carfentanil, which is intended as an anaesthetic for large animals, and is 10,000 times more potent than morphine. We check in on a regular basis with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s Poison Control Center to see if there have been any reports of carfentanil in New York City. Fortunately, to date we have not yet seen any instances of carfentanil in the City.

The Naloxone Leave Behind program allows EMS personnel to leave a naloxone kit with a patient or a patient’s friend or family so that it may be used to revive the patient if he or she overdoses again in the future. Research indicates that people who have experienced a non-fatal overdose are at increased risk of experiencing another overdose in the future. Working with the de Blasio administration and DOHMH, the Leave Behind program enables our members to provide life-saving tools as well as education and instructions



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that will prevent loss of life. Naloxone is being funded and supplied by DOHMH and is provided free of charge to patients and their friends and family.

The process of preparing to go live with the Leave Behind program is itself a success story. FDNY registered with the New York State Department of Health Opioid Overdose Prevention Program in April 2018. Between April and August, working closely with DOHMH, we designed and implemented a training protocol. Using DiamondPlate – an online training platform that is located at every EMS station and firehouse – we successfully trained more than 4,000 EMS members in time to roll out the program on September 1st, and we did it without incurring extra training costs or using overtime.

The kit itself is fairly simple. It contains naloxone nasal spray; rubber gloves; a face shield; alcohol wipes; a handout containing information on the risk of overdose; and an instruction sheet. Each Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Life Support (ALS) unit is stocked with four kits for the Leave Behind program and are not used by the EMTs and paramedics for treatment. The kits are only distributed in instances where EMS personnel have already administered naloxone to the patient. When responding to a suspected opioid overdose, once the patient has been revived and is awake enough to receive a kit, the patient is offered a kit. If a patient declines to receive additional medical assistance after being revived, the patient may be offered a kit if approval is given by our On Line Medical Control doctors. A patient has the right to refuse the kit, and a patient who elopes from the scene is not given a kit. In addition, if a family member or friend of the patient requests a kit, a kit may be left with that person. Once the call is completed, the members update On Line Medical Control in order to track the distribution of Leave Behind kits.

So far, we have distributed more than 30 kits to patients in the first few weeks of the program.



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Introduction 1054

Introduction 1054, sponsored by Chair Borelli, would require the Fire Department to create a method to accept online applications for fire alarm plan examinations. The Fire Department puts a premium on customer service and in fact we have been working on a program that would accomplish exactly what this bill would require. We know that providing online applications for fire alarm examinations would make this process more convenient for members of the public and it is always our goal to improve the manner in which we serve the people of New York. We expect to be able to offer online applications for fire alarm examination soon, and thus we support Introduction 1054.

We would be happy to take your questions at this time.



**TESTIMONY OF THE NEW YORK ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION
BEFORE
THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT
REGARDING INT 1054
SEPTEMBER 17, 2018
CITY HALL, NEW YORK CITY**

Chairman Borelli and honorable members of the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management, good afternoon. I am David Samuels, Past President of the New York Electrical Contractors Association (NYECA), New York's City's leading trade association of unionized electrical contractors. I am also the President and CEO of R.B. Samuels, Inc, a full service electrical contracting firm that was started over 90 years ago by my father and now employs 200 members of Local Union #3, IBEW. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Int 1054, a Local Law to amend the administrative code of the City of New York, in relation to creating online applications for fire alarm plan examinations. Again, on behalf of NYECA, we support this common-sense bill.

This important reform would make all components of the applications for fire alarm plan examinations and installation compliance with approved plans be available for online submission

via the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) website, dramatically modernizing all aspects of the FDNY submission process for fire alarm plan examinations from beginning to end.

Currently, the submission process requires that the electrical contractor assemble (7) documents at the end of the alarm installation process for presentation, in person, at FDNY headquarters located at Brooklyn Metro Tech Center. *(For your additional information, I have attached to this testimony a copy of what is required to present at time of inspection.)* Only when everything is complete and submitted in person at FDNY can an inspection date be obtained. Present protocol limits the number of alarm inspections requests that can be made during the appearance at Metro Tech. Further, FDNY will only schedule up to four inspections per week. Present protocol limits the number of inspection requests that can be made during an appearance. All of these restrictions plus the inability to file online adds to the current backlog at FDNY, which has resulted in a four-month waiting period for a single inspection.

The importance of the inspection itself cannot be overemphasized. Public safety demands that the FDNY Bureau of Fire Prevention inspect life safety systems installed by a NYC licensed electrical contractor. A certificate of occupancy requires an operational alarm system meeting all FDNY criteria. Getting this certificate is the contractual obligation of the installation electrical contractor in order to close out a project.

It had been the objective of past city administrations to expedite all construction related applications. In fact, FDNY once had an online inspection application process. However, the reason why it was abruptly ended is unknown, but will be corrected by this legislation. To reinstate this important technological advancement is in the best interest of all involved parties: the construction industry, the City, and the public we both serve.

With this bill, the entire filing process at FDNY would be digitized and interfaced online, significantly streamlining a bureaucratic process integral to all parties involved in a fire alarm plan examination. This common-sense reform will finally bring FDNY into the modern era regarding how it conducts its business and would be a welcome change from present circumstances. It also represents a small but important step in the continuing effort to make New York City a more business-friendly environment.

NYECA points to the Department of Buildings (DOB) as an example of how well an online application system can work for a major department. The DOB has implemented online submissions as an essential part of its “Building One City” blueprint, with an eventual goal of 100% of DOB applications, reviews, payments and scheduling to be conducted online. Though the transition to “eFiling” is ongoing, the early results are very promising: online submissions are resulting in faster review and approval of critical construction-related applications, as online submission allows for letters of defect and final approvals to be sent out faster, which is so important when it comes to completing complex construction jobs on-time and on-budget.

Since online submissions have already proven to be so successful at DOB, FDNY should do the same. By logical extension, after streamlining the FDNY application submissions process with electronic filings, NYECA members will be able to spend more time on the job doing what they do best: helping to build and improve New York City, instead of waiting on a line at FDNY headquarters. It’s simply a matter of common sense in a digital age, and we are proud to have additional support for this bill from the following leading organizations: Building Trades Employer Association (BTEA), Subcontractors Trade Association (STA), Association of Electrical Contractors, 5 Boro Electrical Contractor Trade Association, the Joint Industry Board of the Electrical Industry, and Local Union #3, IBEW.

NYECA does have one suggestion for a possible amendment to the bill that will make it more precise and effective. Presently, we are concerned that the bill language referring to “fire alarm plan examinations” may be a bit too restrictive in nature and may not cover the multi departments that have jurisdiction of fire alarm plan examinations. The mandate to FDNY should be to move to a fully comprehensive online application process for all components of the fire alarm plan examination process, from the time the plans are submitted to the time the project passes its final inspection. I therefore suggest that the bill be amended to read as follows:

“§15-132 Online applications for fire alarm plan examinations and all inspection related plans. The department shall make all components of applications for fire alarm plan examinations and all inspection related plans available for online submission.”

In conclusion Int 1054 , which would facilitate the ability to file online applications at FDNY will: 1. expedite the filing process overall; 2. ensure on-time occupancy; and 3. expedite revisions to alarm systems. Who wouldn't want that?

As the leading trade association of unionized electrical contractors in New York City, NYECA helps build New York, serves our communities in times of crisis, provides opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses, and promotes the highest standards of worker safety in the industry. With these guiding principles in mind, NYECA supports Int 1054, and we look forward to working with the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management on implementing this much needed improvement in the way FDNY processes its applications.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit and testify on behalf of the New York Electrical Contractors Association in support of Int 1054. I am happy to answer any questions.



BUREAU OF FIRE PREVENTION

FIRE ALARM INSPECTION UNIT

REQUEST FOR INSPECTION DATE

REFERENCE DOCUMENT No: _____ DATE: _____
(PW-1, VO #, L/D #)

ADDRESS _____ BORO M _____ ZIP CODE _____

BUSINESS NAME _____ PREMISES TELEPHONE _____

NEAREST INTERSECTION _____ MEETING LOCATION LFCS _____

JOB DESCRIPTION Addition to Class "E" _____ FLOOR (s) _____

INSPECTION REQUEST MADE BY _____ F.D. EXPEDITOR LIC. No. _____

OFFICE PHONE / _____ FAX / _____ CELL _____ E-MAIL / _____

COMPANY NAME AND ADDRESS _____

BUILDING OWNER OR MANAGING AGENT INFO:

NAME: (PRINT) _____ OFFICE PHONE _____ E-MAIL _____

ADDRESS _____

SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTATION:

- Electrician's Sign-off (Form A-433, signed and sealed) – original, one (1).
- Plan Examination (Form TM-1) – original, one (1).
- F.D. approved original plans (24"x 36") and "AS BUILT" riser diagram (11"x17") – one (1) set.
- The Department of Buildings Plan/Work Application (Form PW-1) – original, one (1).
- Registration of Central Station-Monitored Fire Alarm Systems identifying the terminal assignment number(s) (Form TB-60) ~~for new system only - one (1) copy~~
- Request for Inspection Date (Form B-45M) – three (3) copies.
- File: documents should be neatly arranged (letter size format) and secured by a standard 2-hole fastener.

NO INSPECTION DATE WILL BE ASSIGNED IF THE ABOVE IS NOT PROVIDED.

- To arrange an appointment with the Scheduling Supervisor (request for inspection or re-inspection, inquiry, etc.) in person, please contact the booking clerk at 718-999-5114 at least 48 hours prior to the intended date.
- The building occupants shall be notified prior to the test date.
- Sufficient manpower and equipment shall be made available to conduct test.
- For more details, visit the FDNY Bureau of Fire Prevention website.

OFFICE USE ONLY

INSPECTOR: _____

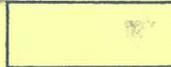
DATE: _____ AT: _____ REF. DOCUMENT No: _____

SPECIAL NOTES: _____

SCHEDULING SUPERVISOR _____ DATE _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CARL GANDOLFO

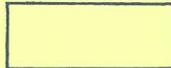
Address: _____

I represent: LOCAL 2507

Address: 150-39 14 AVE WHITESTONE NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Thomas McCavough, Chief of Fire Prevention

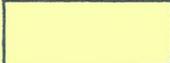
Address: 9 Metrotech Ctr

I represent: FDNY

Address: 9 Metrotech Ctr

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: James Bath, Chief of EMS

Address: 9 Metrotech Ctr

I represent: FDNY

Address: 9 Metrotech Ctr

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dr. Glenn Asaeda

Address: 9 Metrotech Center

I represent: FDNY

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elizabeth Cuscio, Chief of Staff

Address: 9 Metrotech Center

I represent: FDNY

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1654 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dave Samuels

Address: 253 W. 35th NYC 10001

I represent: _____

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/17/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Van Asher

Address: 932 Lincoln Place BX NY

I represent: St Anns corner of Harm Reduction

Address: 886 Westchester Ave BX NY 10459

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms