



March 3, 2020  
Testimony of Daniel Nigro, Commissioner, FDNY  
**Preliminary Budget Hearing**

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Good morning Chair Borelli and all of the Council Members present. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2021 for the Fire Department. I am joined this morning by Laura Kavanagh, First Deputy Commissioner; John Sudnik, Chief of Department; Stephen Rush, Deputy Commissioner for Budget and Finance; and Nafeesah Noonan, Assistant Commissioner for Recruitment and Retention.

I am pleased to report that fire deaths in the City of New York in 2019 were down 25%. There were a total of 66 civilian fire deaths last year, and while even a single death is one too many, we are encouraged by this reduction. This outstanding achievement is the result of the brave service of FDNY members working together to remove those trapped by fire, providing unrivaled emergency medical care, thoroughly investigating fires, educating the public, and inspecting buildings and areas of public assembly throughout the city to ensure the safety of the people whom we serve. In New York City, we have now experienced a trend of 14 consecutive years with fewer than 100 fire deaths. We continue to build on that success.

At the Fire Department, an incident is designated a "serious fire" when it escalates to the point of requiring a full "all-hands" assignment or higher, consisting of a dozen fire units that respond, conduct search and rescue operations, and extinguish the fire. We experienced 3% fewer serious fires in 2019 than we did in 2018, and overall, we've seen a reduction in serious fires of 24% over the last five years.

Fewer serious fires than in past years is obviously a positive development. However, the number of calls that we received for medical emergencies are trending in the opposite direction. In 2019, the Fire Department received approximately 564,000 calls for life-threatening medical incidents, and approximately 968,000 calls for non-life-threatening medical incidents. This total – nearly 1,532,000 medical calls – represents the highest number of medical calls that the Department has ever received. Remarkably, this is the fifth year in a row that we have broken a new record for medical call volume. Our members are as busy as they have ever been.

With our emergency incident count as high as it is, it's more important than ever that we leverage additional tools to help keep the city safe. One way that we accomplish this is through our expanded outreach to members of the community. The more we're able to educate our neighbors before they find themselves in times of trouble, the less likely they are to experience emergencies and the safer they will be when they do.



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The Fire Department's Community Affairs Unit conducts Fire Safety Education demonstrations and CPR instruction seminars in communities throughout the five boroughs. By partnering with community groups, elected officials, schools, senior centers, and our fellow city agencies, in 2019 the Fire Safety Education Unit coordinated or participated in more than 7,500 education events, reaching nearly 600,000 New Yorkers. When a neighborhood experiences a fatal fire, members of the Fire Safety Education Unit respond to provide educational information to residents and sign them up for smoke alarm installations.

We are also in the midst of a several-years-long smoke alarm distribution and installation campaign with our partners at the American Red Cross. We meet New Yorkers at a variety of community events and sign them up for installations, and we conduct targeted door-to-door campaigns in neighborhoods where the need is the greatest. Between May 2015 and December 2019, we visited 35,000 homes, installed 100,000 alarms, and distributed another 90,000.

One popular facet of our outreach is our Summer Block Parties, where we distribute fire safety information, train attendees in CPR, and sign up residents for fire alarm installation. In 2019, nearly 6,000 people attended a Fire Department block party. We also distributed more than 62,000 alarm batteries, and we gave fire safety presentations to more than 316,000 students at New York City schools. The unit provided CPR training to more than 18,000 high school students, and nearly 28,000 trainees in total.

We partnered with the Department for the Aging to conduct fire safety workshops geared towards seniors at 87 locations. We also worked with the Department of Youth and Community Development, resulting in over 2,500 K-5 students from the Beacon/Afterschool programs attending an Open House at their local firehouse. This is the second year that we've done the program with DYCD and we like that not only do the students learn about fire safety, but it gives them a small sense of what it might be like to pursue a career at the Fire Department.

We conducted fire safety trainings for clergy members, preparing them to serve as ambassadors to spread fire-safety talking points to their communities, and Fire Safety Education teams and American Red Cross partners visited houses of worship to sign up congregants for fire alarm installations. We similarly worked with the Administration of Children's Services, training 2,300 frontline child welfare staff so that they know to keep an eye out for potential fire hazards in the home and refer the families that they are working with for a smoke alarm installation at no charge to the family.



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The FDNY also had a very successful year in advancing another of our priorities: the Department's commitment to cultivating and sustaining a work environment that embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Bureau of Diversity and Inclusion was incredibly active in 2019, engineering a wide variety of inward- and outward-facing programming and training. We hosted several community engagement events. A small sampling of those events included an event honoring FDNY Women during Women's History Month, the Department's first Holocaust Remembrance Day Event, an Asian Pacific-American Heritage Month celebration, Chanukah celebrations, a Six Principles of Nonviolence Talk in honor of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., two Black History Month events at headquarters, our third annual Women to Women Summit, our fourth annual LGBTQ Pride Celebration, and celebrating a variety of Hispanic and Latinx cultural initiatives.

Our members also took part in a number of parades, including the World Pride Parade, the Veterans Day Parade, the Celebrate Israel Day Parade, the Philippine Independence Day Parade, the Puerto Rican Day Parade, the Lunar New Year parade, and a large number of other parades celebrating the diversity of our great city.

The Bureau of Diversity and Inclusion was also responsible for a large number of internal initiatives in 2019. We distribute on a quarterly basis two internal publications devoted to diversity and inclusion best practices, and we rolled out a full multimedia campaign, highlighting messaging and tips on contributing to an inclusive culture using posters, screensavers, kiosk displays, videos, and brochures. The Diversity and Inclusion Unit worked with the FDNY EEO Office to train uniformed members and civilians in Unconscious Bias, LGBTQ discrimination, Sexual Harassment, EEO issues, Emotional Intelligence, Religious Diversity, as well as conducting individual meetings at firehouses to discuss diversity and inclusion. We also continued educational meetings with the Department's 40 Firefighter, EMS, and Civilian Affiliated Organizations to better support diversity and inclusion objectives and to foster a more positive work environment.

As we state in our Diversity and Inclusion vision, the excellence of the New York City Fire Department is enhanced by the ability to recruit, hire, retain, and promote highly skilled, talented, and motivated members from diverse backgrounds. As I have testified to the Council previously, the Department put a great deal of resources into our firefighter recruitment campaign for the most recent Open/Competitive exam. The campaign was very successful in recruiting a diverse pool of candidates. 56% of test takers were non-white and 9% were female. We know that there is still much more work to do, but our progress is encouraging.



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In 2019, we began to see the fruits of that labor. In September, we graduated the full class of probationary firefighters from the current civil service list. The composition of the class represented the growing diversity of the Department, including 37% individuals identifying as people of color, 12% black graduates, 20% Latino graduates, and 5% Asian graduates and 120 veterans. Among this outstanding group of graduates were 16 women – the second largest group of women in a Probationary Firefighter class in FDNY history. I can now proudly say that for the first time, more than 100 women serve as Firefighters and Fire Officers in our Department, and that number will only continue to grow.

We have many classes from this list to go, and we anticipate that our Department will continue growing more diverse with each class.

I am passionate about recruiting new members to join the Fire Department because it is such an incredible honor to serve the people and the communities of New York.

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

**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: JOSEFINA SANFELIU

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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☐ in favor ☒ in opposition

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Name: BRUCE JACOB

Address: 4418 ROCKAWAY BEACH BLVD

I represent: COALITION OF ROCKAWAY

Address: 4418 ROCKAWAY BEACH BLVD

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/3/03

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Stephen Kish

Address: Deputy Commissioner Budget & Finance

I represent: FDNY

Address: 9 Metrotech

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/8/2020

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Name: John Sudrock

Address: Chief of Department

I represent: FDNY

Address: 9 Millbrook

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/8/2020

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Name: Laura Kavanaugh

Address: First Lieutenant

I represent: FDNY

Address: 9 Millbrook

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/8/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Daniel Dwyer

Address: Chief of Department

I represent: FDNY

Address: 9 Millbrook

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Date: 3/3/2020

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Nafesah Nura

Address: 100 West 10th St, New York, NY 10011

I represent: FDNY

Address: 9 Melrose

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Name: BARZILAY OREN

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: FMS LOCAL 2507

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/3/2020

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Vincent Variale

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: President, L3621, DC37

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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