



March 19, 2021  
Testimony of Commissioner Daniel Nigro, FDNY  
Preliminary Budget Hearing

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Good morning Chair Borelli and all of the Council Members present. My name is Daniel Nigro and I am the Commissioner of the New York City Fire Department. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about the year that we've had at the Fire Department and the outlook for the year ahead.

I am proud to report that, when confronted with one of the most challenging public health emergencies in the history of New York City, the members of the FDNY elevated their performance to meet the challenge head on. While COVID-19 has touched the lives of every New Yorker, our extraordinary emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and firefighters were among the first people in the city to confront the virus. At the peak of the crisis, they labored through the busiest days in the history of EMS, responding to 6,500 medical emergencies a day. It was an immense burden on our workforce, but we took early action that prepared us well to handle the rapidly expanding workload. We shored up internal resources, remained flexible and frequently adapted policies to meet the changing needs of the operational environment, and we called upon our partners in the private sector and municipalities across the country to aid in the fight. Courageous EMS personnel came from all over the United States to lend a hand. By pulling together, our EMTs, paramedics, firefighters, officers, and civilian support staff were able to fulfill the Department's mission to keep New Yorkers safe during some of the toughest times that the City has ever experienced.

Even as we succeeded in the field, the virus took a toll on our members and their families. Fourteen members of the Department passed away due to COVID-related issues. One visiting paramedic from Denver, Colorado also died after traveling to New York as part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Ambulance Contract. The Fire Department introduced safety measures to protect our members, working with the FDNY Foundation, the Mayor's Office, and our fellow city agencies to set up alternate accommodations to provide members with the option of staying in a hotel to decrease the risk to their own families. We partnered with NYU and Northwell so that our members could visit a broad range of sites to receive free testing. Once the vaccine became available, we worked with New York State and negotiated to receive our own supply of vaccine so that we could begin vaccinating our members as quickly as possible. We began with three vaccination sites and have since increased to five locations, two of which serve eligible city employees from other agencies as well. As of March 17th, we have performed over 60,000 vaccination doses. This includes approximately 13,500 first

dose vaccinations for FDNY members and approximately 25,000 first dose vaccinations for employees of other city agencies, as well as more than 9,500 second dose shots for FDNY members and more than 12,000 second dose vaccinations for employees of other city agencies. Not a single recipient has experienced a serious side effect.

However, it's not just the physical effects of the virus that take a toll on our members. EMTs, paramedics, and firefighters spend each shift, day in and day out, responding to emergencies. During the heaviest periods of COVID responses, members were responding to cardiac arrest and death totals that reached previously unseen heights. Our Counseling Service Unit (CSU) ramped up their outreach, logging on to thousands of virtual counseling sessions to provide support for members in need. CSU maintained an active 24-hour hotline so that members had the option of speaking with a live counselor at any hour of the day. They also trained additional peer-support personnel who visited firehouses and EMS stations. The Department performed targeted outreach to members who were quarantined or isolated with their families, checking on their well-being and delivering personal protective equipment.

In addition to the extraordinary work of the Bureau of EMS, the Fire Department also had great success last year with regard to firefighting operations. New York City experienced 63 civilian fire deaths in 2020, which represented a 5% decrease from the previous year. It also marks the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of fewer than 100 fire fatalities.

We do not take this achievement lightly. To put this trend into historical context, when I began my career with the Fire Department in the 1970s, we routinely experienced hundreds of deaths, with 310 in 1970. That number stayed high for a long time, with 285 deaths in 1980 and 275 in 1990. The progress of the last decade and a half is the result of well-trained members responding quickly, using top of the line firefighting and emergency medical equipment, providing unrivaled medical care, inspecting buildings and areas of public assembly to eradicate unsafe conditions, and thoroughly investigating fires. We also know that, if a fire does occur, one of the biggest factors in the occupants emerging safely is a working smoke alarm. By partnering with the FDNY Foundation, the American Red Cross, alarm manufacturers, and the Council, since 2015, we have distributed approximately 200,000 alarms and installed more than 110,000 alarms. We also make it a priority to proactively educate members of the public to help them avoid experiencing serious fires.

As many councilmembers know firsthand from experiences in your own districts, prior to the pandemic, a large component of our public education campaign consisted of in-person presentations. Teams of firefighters and retired firefighters visit schools, community centers, senior facilities, and public housing complexes, to name just a few, to conduct fire safety presentations. Often the presentations are geared towards the audience or seasonal points of emphasis such as upcoming holidays. Without the ability to gather in person, our ability to perform traditional outreach was severely curtailed. However, the team quickly retooled and shifted their focus to conducting outreach using the methods available to them.

Using video conferencing and remote instruction, the Department was able to continue educating the public by performing Fire Safety Education, Mobile CPR, and maintaining the Fire Department's usual brand of aggressive community engagement. Faced with the inability to send teams of educators into classrooms, the Fire Safety Education Unit developed a digital curriculum for school-aged audiences. The curriculum was shared with administrators across the city and promoted to more than 500 schools, United Federation of Teachers borough chapters, and private schools. They also developed an online curriculum for adult audiences and worked with community partners to share the information with senior populations throughout the city.

We were even able to host a full calendar of events for Fire Prevention Week in October, though of course it looked a little different than it has in previous years. Members of the Fire Safety Education unit held more than 30 outdoor tabling events throughout the five boroughs, working with community groups and elected officials to complement that effort by promoting fire safety messaging through email blasts and on social media. The highlight of the week was a virtual educational event that took place at the Fire Zone in Rockefeller Center with more than 3,500 New York City students tuning in to the event. These efforts were bolstered by the Fire Department's own social media platforms where the Department shares a wide variety of content, including Public Service Announcements on topics such as safe cooking, properly using smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, and creating an escape plan. Overall, educational content posted to social media in 2020 had a total reach of more than 149 million views.

The Fire Department's Youth Workforce & Pipeline Programs also had an historic year, despite the complications of the pandemic. At Captain Vernon A. Richard High School, FDNY instructors worked with DOE partners to successfully transition to virtual education. We were able to maintain full enrollment in the "EMS 101 Course" – which is provided as a Junior Year elective – and the "FDNY Prep Course" – which is provided as a Senior Year elective. For the last decade, the Fire Department has conducted a Job Readiness Final for FDNY Prep Scholars that involves students sitting for mock job interviews with members of the Department's Executive Team. Determined not to let the current state of events interfere, our Youth Workforce team created a program of virtual job interviews and students were able to meet with executive staff such as the First Deputy Commissioner, the Chief of Operations, and the Chief of Staff, and I joined the group myself for a post-interview chat. We held a surprise Graduation Parade for our FDNY Prep Scholars, traveling to their homes with a caravan of FDNY vehicles and gift bags. We conducted both the Winter and Summer installations of our EMS Youth Academy programs, and fifty-six students completed their New York State EMT Basic Certification and filed for civil service. That represents the largest ever number of FDNY Youth participants to become certified EMTs in a calendar year. This program has been a great success for the City of New York. In all, 100 former FDNY Youth participants have been hired by the Department. We look forward to developing new members through this program for years to come.

Given the current fiscal environment, I do not have a great deal of new spending to discuss for Fiscal Year 2022. However, I do want to highlight funding that we received for the mental health response pilot that we are partnering on this year with Health and Hospitals (H&H). In the case of calls regarding non-violent mental health emergencies in which the individual does not possess

a weapon, the City will dispatch a team consisting of two EMTs and an H&H-licensed clinical caseworker to respond to the individual. Calls that include violence or in which the individual is believed to have a weapon will be routed in the traditional manner, which includes a response from the NYPD. The safety of our members is paramount, so precautions have been taken to design a program in which EMS members feel secure. Training for the members of this pilot will be conducted by several agencies including FDNY, DOHMH, and NYPD, and we worked directly with the unions in establishing the qualifications of members who are eligible to participate. Like any pilot, this will provide us with an opportunity to learn and develop best practices. We are hopeful that the results will enable us to provide better care for New Yorkers experiencing mental health emergencies.

I am optimistic as we look ahead to the coming year. I take great pride in the resiliency of our members and their ability to perform under enormous pressure in the most demanding of environments. I hope that the people of New York share this sense and that a silver lining of this turbulent period is that they feel reassured that, no matter what obstacles arise, the Fire Department will answer the call and immediately begin working to keep them safe.



**Testimony of  
Andrew D'Amora  
First Deputy Commissioner  
New York City Department of Emergency Management  
Preliminary Budget Hearing  
March 19, 2021**

Good morning Chairperson Borelli and members of the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management. I am Andy D'Amora, First Deputy Commissioner of New York City Emergency Management. I am joined today by Emergency Management Chief Financial Officer Stacy Rosenfeld.

Clearly it has been a year like no other. We have been fully activated for COVID-19 for more than one calendar year, the longest activation of Emergency Management history. During this time, there have been multiple overlapping activations – heat emergencies, snowstorms, and Tropical Storm Isaias. We have responded to over 500 incidents including building collapses, fires, infrastructure incidents, and water mains, held 88 outreach events, sent approximately 3,300 Notify NYC messages, released nine podcasts, and provided over 500 notifications to elected officials. Emergency Management also assisted with large-scale programs such as GetFood, GetCool, and the Vaccine Command Center. All this while continuing our non-emergency work, mandates, and responsibilities.

Additionally, this year Emergency Management was in the midst of an organizational re-alignment that streamlined the agency into five bureaus and executive offices. The new bureaus mirror the national model for emergency management that views disasters as recurring events with four phases: Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. Reorganizing around this national model allows us to build and administer the new capabilities necessary to reduce risk, prepare our communities, and minimize the consequences of emergencies. The agency also formed an Equity and Diversity Council as an employee-engaged approach to both facilitate discussions on issues and concerns regarding diversity, equity and inclusion, and to integrate the aforementioned structures into the agency's mission, operations, and strategies. It further develops and maintains an agency climate that welcomes and promotes respect for the wide variety of human experience.

Allow me a moment to express my gratitude to the more than 200 dedicated professionals at Emergency Management, who have literally worked around the clock over the past year in an unending activation cycle.

We continue to look ahead to find new ways to prepare the city and our citizens for the next emergency. With that, let me now provide a snapshot of our budget for next year.

Our projected total Fiscal Year 2022 City Tax Levy expense budget is \$28.1 million. We rely on our City tax levy expense budget to support the majority of the agency's administrative, technological and operational costs.



The projected Fiscal Year 2022 City Tax Levy Personnel Services budget is \$6.4 million, which supports the 63 personnel lines paid directly through our tax levy-funds. This includes \$1.5 million in funding for 18 staff members dedicated to working on increasing communication and services to people with access and functional needs. Our other staffing is supported through grant funds and personnel on assignment from multiple City agencies.

Our projected Fiscal Year 2022 Other Than Personnel Services budget is \$21.7 million, which covers all agency operating and administrative costs. This budget includes a significant portion of non-discretionary funding. These funds are designated to cover our warehouse lease, utilities, and telecommunications costs including the maintenance and operations of our Emergency Operations Center and back-up facilities. This money also supports our fleet and all additional equipment, supplies and materials needed to run the agency.

The agency receives grant funding to support many of our core programs. In the past year, we secured \$32.7 million in federal funding, primarily through the Urban Areas Security Initiative grant. This funding is vital to our ability to run many of our finest initiatives, including the Ready New York public education program, Community Emergency Response Team program, Continuity of Operations Program, Geographic Information Systems, Training and Exercises, Watch Command and Response, and Citywide Incident Management Systems planning, and the Emergency Supply Stockpile. We work with City Hall, OMB, the City's Congressional delegation and our partner agencies to push for full homeland security funding in future years; this money supports critical operations within ours and several other agencies' budgets and is critical to the City.

In addition to our regular mandate, during the COVID-19 activation we put in place approximately 100 contracts to support the City's COVID-19 response. This includes contracts to support medical staffing for hospitals and nursing homes, hoteling of people exposed to COVID-19 who needed a safe place to isolate, PPE for essential workers, shelf-stable food for vulnerable populations, and a renewed sign language translation contract to ensure all New Yorkers had the access and support they needed during this very difficult time. We continue to work closely with OMB to ensure the City is reimbursed by FEMA for all eligible costs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to working with the Council on issues of emergency readiness and response, and I am happy to take your questions.

**Testimony to the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management of the New York City Council Concerning the FDNY FY2022 Budget**

March 19, 2021

Chairman Borelli and member of the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management, thank for the opportunity to testify on issues surrounding the FY2022 budget for the Fire Department of New York and particularly the Bureau of Fire Prevention.

As we work together to help foster a rapid and equitable recovery from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that the Council consider prioritizing greater funding for the Fire Department's Bureau of Fire Prevention (the Bureau) in the FY2022 budget for the purposes of dedicating more staff to fire alarm plan review and inspection processes. The Bureau of Fire Prevention plays an essential role in the well-being of New Yorkers by reviewing and regulating building equipment that poses a fire hazard or is designed to prevent fires. Moreover, the Bureau is responsible for inspecting the installation of all the covered equipment to ensure safety and compliance, a task that continues to evolve as New York's 1.1 million buildings adapt and install new technologies. This is a critical life-safety function that is vital to the health and safety of all New Yorkers.

While the Bureau's budget has marginally increased over the last few years, it is not enough to keep pace with the increased level of work. At \$47 million in FY2021, the Bureau's budget remains 2.24% of that of the Department and only 0.05% of the City's total adopted budget. With more than two dozen types of inspections to perform on the city's buildings, facilities, and vehicles, the Bureau does not have necessary resources to support properties and businesses in protecting the life and safety of New Yorkers in a timely manner. This resource shortage, along with increased work, has resulted in wait times of between eight and twelve weeks for plans to be reviewed and similar timeframes for inspections to be conducted. While the Bureau has adopted programmatic reforms to help address this challenge without jeopardizing public safety, in the absence of more resources these long processing times will continue.

This challenge has a direct impact on the City's ability to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. As businesses open, the Bureau is responsible for inspecting conditions and assisting businesses in protecting the public by identifying any threats to health and safety. In addition, these inspections are needed prior to a building receiving a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy so these delays mean that buildings cannot be used for extended periods, resulting in significant losses in resources and in revenue for building owners and the City. Increased funding will help the Bureau conduct this work more efficiently by mitigating delays in plan review and more quickly getting New Yorkers back to work.

FDNY has among the fastest response times in the world for arriving to the scene of a fire. We should equip the Department with the means necessary to prevent fires with equal efficiency and repute. Collectively, we understand the Bureau's importance in protecting the lives and safety of our city as well as the pressure and strain of its workload. In the interest of public well-being, we encourage the Council to provide further funding to the Bureau so it can more effectively carry out these critical responsibilities.

Thank you for the consideration of these points.

**Bronx Chamber of Commerce**

**Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce**

Building Owners and Managers Association

New York Coalition of Code Consultants

New York Hospitality Alliance

Queens Chamber of Commerce

The Real Estate Board of New York

Staten Island Chamber of Commerce