



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 872

Resolution urging the New York State Legislature to include DEP response vehicles as an “authorized emergency vehicle” for purposes of using a siren.

By Council Members Vallone Jr., Fidler, Nelson and Weprin

Whereas, There are approximately 600 water main breaks every year in New York City and those that are serious and cause floods have detrimental effects on the lives of their victims; and

Whereas, In addition to the routine day-to-day operation of the water and sewer systems, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations (BWSO) is responsible for responding to emergency situations including water main breaks, leaks and other failures that result in street flooding; and

Whereas, On February 16, 2005, a 20-inch water main break in an Astoria neighborhood flooded homes and submerged vehicles with nearly 1 million gallons of water, affecting numerous homes and homeowners on 70th Avenue and Ditmars Blvd.; and

Whereas, According to several reports, it took DEP responders over two and a half hours after the pipe burst to locate the proper shut-off valve and stem the flow of water; and

Whereas, DEP officials stated that responding crews were delayed by traffic en route from Flushing, clearly demonstrating the need for sirens on DEP emergency vehicles which could have aided the crews in arriving at the scene sooner; and

Whereas, Current New York state law reads that sirens “shall not be used on any vehicle other than an authorized emergency vehicle” which includes any “ambulance, police vehicle, correction vehicle, fire vehicle,

civil defense emergency vehicle, emergency ambulance service vehicle, blood delivery vehicle, county emergency medical services vehicle, environmental emergency response vehicle, sanitation patrol vehicle, hazardous materials emergency vehicle and ordnance disposal vehicle of the armed forces of the United States”; and

Whereas, Additionally, “environmental emergency response vehicles” authorized to use a siren are defined by state law as “every designated vehicle ... charged with the responsibility for environmental protection, while engaged in a response to a report of an emergency resulting from an actual or potential release, spill or leak of, or other exposure to, hazardous substances,” excluding DEP emergency vehicles responding to street flooding; and

Whereas, Just as ambulances, fire trucks and police cars are equipped with sirens for the purpose of getting their members to their destination in the shortest time possible, DEP emergency vehicles responding to water main breaks and street flooding should be equipped with sirens as well, in order to limit the amount of human and property loss caused by street flooding incidents; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the city of New York urges the New York State Legislature to include DEP response vehicles as an “authorized emergency vehicle” for purposes of using a siren.

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