

COMMITTEE ON FIRE & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT & INVESTIGATIONS

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON FIRE & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT & INVESTIGATIONS

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Monday, November 20, 2023

Start: 10:21 A. M.

Recess: 12:48 P. M.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Committee On Fire & Emergency
Management Hon. Joann Ariola, Chair

Committee On Oversight &
Investigations Hon. Gale A.
Brewer, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

David M. Carr
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Oswald Feliz
James F. Gennaro
Robert F. Holden
Ari Kagan
Kevin C. Riley
Lynn C. Schulman
Kalman Yeger

COMMITTEE ON FIRE & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT & INVESTIGATIONS

COUNCIL MEMBERS (CONTINUED)

Diana Ayala
Rita C. Joseph
Shekar Krishnan
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
Nantasha M. Williams
Julie Won
Marjorie Velázquez

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING: Bottcher, Hanif,
and Restler

COMMITTEE ON FIRE & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT & INVESTIGATIONS

A P P E A R A N C E S

Christina Farrell
First Deputy Commissioner of the New York City
Emergency Management Department (NYCEM)

Chief John M. Esposito,
Chief of Fire Operations The New York City Fire
Department (FDNY)

Kimberly Cipriano
Deputy Chief Operating Officer New York City
Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

John Shea,
Chief Executive Officer at New York City
Department of Education (DOE)

Brit Byrd,
Senior Planner at the office of Brooklyn Borough
President Antonio Reynoso

Raul Rivera
Representing Himself

Victoria Sanders
Research Analyst at New York City Environmental
Justice Alliance

Benjamin Young, PhD
Senior Program Manager, Strategic Initiatives,
International Science Reserve, New York Academy
of Sciences

Adam Roberts,
Policy Director for the
Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP)

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT & INVESTIGATIONS 4

2 SERGEANT MACEEDI: This is a microphone test for
3 the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management joint
4 with the Committee on Oversight Investigation.

5 Today's date is November 20, 2023. We are located in
6 the council chambers. The recording is done by Rocco
7 Maceedi (phonetic).

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, and welcome to
9 today's New York City Council Hearing for Fire and
10 Emergency Management joint with the Oversight and
11 Investigation Committee. Please place all electronic
12 devices to vibrate or silent mode. Please do not
13 approach the dais for any reason. We will be more
14 than happy to help you at the Sergeant's desk.

15 Chairs, we are ready to begin.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: (GAVELING IN) Good morning, I
17 am Council Member Joann Ariola, and I am Chair of the
18 Committee on Fire and Emergency Management. Today I
19 am joined by committee members who are present:
20 Council Member Schulman, Council Member Carr, Council
21 Member De La Rosa, Council Member Holden, and
22 additionally, Council Member Hanif.

23 Today's hearing, held jointly with the Committee
24 on Oversight and Investigation, chaired by my
25

3 esteemed colleague, Council Member Gale Brewer,
4 will examine emergency planning, notifications, and
5 response to citywide flooding events. An unfortunate
6 reality for our city has become the increasing
7 frequency of significant flooding by heavy rainfall
8 or coastal storms. These events have debilitated our
9 city's infrastructure, stranded motorists and
10 commuters, and endangered the lives of City residents
11 and first responders. New York City Emergency
12 Management, NYCEM, serves the vital role of
13 coordinating the emergency planning and multi-agency
14 responses to severe weather events that impact the
15 City.

16 Of significant relevance here, the City's Flash
17 Flood Emergency Plan, which has been activated at
18 increasing [BACKGROUND NOISE] regularity, guides how
19 the City prepares for and responds to flooding events
20 in the hopes of mitigating harm to life and property.

21 Among other measures, the plan calls for targeted
22 cleaning and maintenance of recurring flooding
23 locations to ensure debris is cleared from streets
24 and catch basins, the monitoring of recurring flood
25 locations to improve responses during a flood events,
and to help direct recovery efforts, as well as

3 dewatering operations by the FDNY equipment and
4 personnel at critical streets and intersections
5 across the City.

6 The agencies we have joining us today play
7 significant roles in executing these plans: NYCEM,
8 the FDNY, and the Department of Environmental
9 Protection (DEP).

10 We are interested in examining these plans, how
11 they have evolved, how they have been implemented,
12 including the recent flooding events in late
13 September which caused significant damage to the
14 City. Additionally, NYCEM operates the emergency
15 notification systems for the City through Notify NYC.

16 As preparedness relies on awareness, we look
17 forward to speaking with NYCEM about ongoing efforts
18 to improve emergency notification and ensure more
19 people receive lifesaving information during these
20 events.

21 Finally, the Fire and Emergency Management
22 Committee will be hearing three pieces of legislation
23 about emergency planning and response to air quality
24 emergencies:

25 Introduction 1199, sponsored by Council Member
Restler, would require the Department of

3 Environmental Protection (DEP) to declare any day on
4 which the federal Air Quality Index is expected to or
5 does exceed 150 as a "Spare the Air Day," and to post
6 on its website and publicly disseminate information
7 concerning the air quality emergency. The bill would
8 also require DEP to work with other agencies to
9 implement emergency response protocols on Spare the
10 Air Days, including by ensuring that all clean air
11 centers are open to the public, distributing face
12 masks, opening High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes,
13 and creating short-term access to shelters for
14 homeless individuals.

15 Introduction 1200, also sponsored by Council
16 Member Restler, would require NYCEM to develop and
17 implement a plan to ensure that notifications
18 disseminated by New York City relating to an air
19 quality emergency are frequent, timely, disseminated
20 in advance of the emergency to the extent possible,
21 and include the expected Air Quality Index, include
22 information about how to stay safe during the
23 emergency.

24 And, finally, Introduction 1201, This bill would
25 require NYCEM to develop and implement a

2 comprehensive plan to address air quality emergencies
3 in the city, involving in part the identification of
4 other governmental agencies NYCEM must contact,
5 identification of circumstances under which NYCEM
6 would call upon other jurisdictions for assistance,
7 the creation or designation of clean air centers for
8 use by the public, measures to protect the health of
9 the public during an emergency, measures to inform
10 the public about an emergency, limiting of use of
11 motor vehicles in the city's fleet during an
12 emergency, and measures to reduce the deterioration
13 of air quality.

14 I look forward to hearing the administration's
15 public testimony on these topics, and thank you all
16 for coming to today's hearing. I yield now to my co-
17 chair, Council Member and Chair, Gale Brewer.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much, Chair
19 Ariola. I am Gale Brewer, Chair of Committee for
20 Oversight Investigation, I want to welcome everyone
21 here, and I look forward to working with the
22 Committee on Fire and Emergency Management regarding
23 the flooding disaster on September 29, 2023. On that
24 particular day - I know the MTA is not here today -
25

3 but so you know, I was on a train trying to get
4 to what I thought was going be the Mayor's press
5 conference. I didn't think he was going to cancel
6 it, and I was damned if I wasn't going to get to it.
7 So, I just sat on the train for about three hours; I
8 met all my constituents, it was a very nice
9 experience. But, the train never moved, and to be
10 honest with you, even though we were told constantly
11 that *the train is not moving*, we were never told when
12 it would move. There were three trains out, buses
13 were very slow, and there was actually no way to get
14 downtown at that point - no cabs, et cetera. So, it
15 really was a disaster in many different ways.

16 Over the last decade, we know that climate change
17 has emerged as an ever present threat to the City's
18 infrastructure and health - and not just when it
19 comes to big hurricanes like Sandy - the temperatures
20 rise, more ocean water evaporates, and routine
21 rainstorms now threaten to drop so much water so
22 quickly, that they bring the City to a halt as we
23 know.

24 The ever intensifying threat of climate change is
25 disruptive and more sudden, but it is not necessarily

3 unpredictable, and that is why we are here today.

4 We know it's coming, and the City has developed
5 systems that are supposed to warn New Yorkers ahead
6 of extreme weather, so they can change plans and take
7 precautions. Most New Yorkers found themselves on
8 that day surprised and unprepared for the late
9 September downpour, finding themselves on subway
10 platforms that were flooding or stranded in different
11 boroughs with no way to get home.

12 Why were so many New Yorkers caught unaware by
13 one of these increasingly predictable storms? Today
14 we are here to examine the City's response to the
15 flooding and especially its public outreach efforts
16 in the hours before the rain began. We want to
17 consider whether the tools we have in place like
18 Notify NYC - which I have - but it does talk so much
19 about who got lost and who's missing, that I must
20 admit I don't pay as much attention to it as I
21 should. And I think it is something we have to think
22 about as a tool. But, we have it, and it meets the
23 needs of our city and reaching residents - for some,
24 but not everyone. And I do think it needs a
25 different retooling. We have serious misgivings

2 about how engaged the mayoral administration was on
3 the matter in the hours before the storm bore down.

4 I do want to thank many people for putting
5 together today's hearing from the Oversight and
6 Investigation's Committee Staff: Nicole Catá,
7 Legislative Counsel; Erica Cohen, Legislative Policy
8 Analyst; Alex Yablon, Legislative Policy Analyst;
9 and Owen Kotowski, Financial Policy Analyst. And the
10 entire Oversight and Division staff: Aaron
11 Mendelsohn, Meagan Powers, Kevin Frick, Zachary
12 Meher, and Katie Sinise. And from my office, Sam
13 Goldsmith. And thank you very much.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: We will now turn it over to
15 committee counsel for the swearing in of those
16 testifying.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chairs. We will now
18 hear testimony from the administration. We will hear
19 from Christina Farrell from NYCEM; Chief John
20 Esposito, Chief of Fire Operations at FDNY; Kimberly
21 Cipriano from DEP, and John Shea from DOE.

22 Before we begin, I will administer the
23 affirmation. Panelists, please raise your right hand.
24 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole
25

2 truth, and nothing but the truth, before this
3 committee, and to respond honestly to council member
4 questions?

5 [ADMINISTRATION AFFIRMS]

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, you may begin when
7 ready.

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Good morning
9 members of the New York City Council. I am Christina
10 Farrell, First Deputy Commissioner at New York City
11 Emergency Management, and I am here to discuss the
12 weather impacts to New York City on September 29,
13 2023, inclusive of our preparedness and response to
14 that emergency event. I'm joined today by Deputy
15 Chief Operating Officer, Kim Cipriano from the New
16 York City Department of Environmental Protection,
17 Chief John Esposito from the New York City fire
18 Department, and as it's been mentioned, John Shea
19 from New York City Public Schools.

20 First, I want to briefly discuss the naming of
21 this storm. There have been various entities who in
22 the days following the event called the storm the
23 remnants of Ophelia. However, this weather pattern
24 did not meet the National Weather Service definition
25 of a remnant storm. In fact, the remnants of Ophelia

2 had entirely dissipated several days beforehand, and
3 the Weather Service has stated that they will not be
4 calling this a remnant system in their storm
5 reporting. This is important because as the City's
6 official weather partner, we should endeavor to
7 ensure our messaging is aligned with the Weather
8 Service. Additionally, although storm names can be
9 useful for warning the public, they can also be a
10 detriment if used incorrectly, because it gives the
11 false impression that it takes a named storm to
12 produce significant impacts. This is false, and the
13 public should know that not every storm in the future
14 will come with a name. Stated correctly, this was a
15 flash flood event.

16 Second, to understand how the City responds to
17 flash flood emergencies, it's important to understand
18 the science behind it and the challenges with respect
19 to flash flood prediction. This first challenge is
20 meteorological and includes factors such as the
21 speed, strength, and evolution of the parent system;
22 the intensity of motion of individual storm cells,
23 and bands that are producing heavy rain; and whether
24
25

2 new cells are developing and impacting the same area
3 or neighborhood multiple times. Due to the chaotic
4 nature of weather modeling, it is not always possible
5 to predict these factors far in advance as there is
6 an inherent uncertainty with respect to heavy
7 rainfall prediction. There is very little lead time,
8 perhaps only an hour or so, to accurately identify
9 the precise location and intensity of this rainfall.
10 This means The Weather Service might be able to
11 identify a flash flood threat for the tri-state area,
12 or for the City as a whole, with enough lead time to
13 activate the emergency plan and warn the public, but
14 predicting rainfall at smaller scales, such as by
15 borough or neighborhood or street level, is not
16 impossible until the storm is bearing down on the
17 City.

18 This correlates to a distribution dilemma. I'm
19 sure you've observed this phenomenon yourself where
20 you've been seeing some portions of the City
21 experiencing very heavy rainfall, while other areas
22 are entirely dry. By contrast, snow tends to fall
23 much more uniformly across a given geographical area,
24 which is why winter weather advisories and
25

3 warnings are issued up to 48 hours in advance. The
4 high variability in this distribution of rainfall;
5 however, means flood advisories and flash flood
6 warnings are issued only an hour or so in advance, or
7 in some cases, as a storm is ongoing. This is
8 compounded by the fact that small changes in the
9 intensity, movement, and development of a storm can
10 result in large changes to the forecast. A shift of
11 only a few miles can be the difference between
12 minimal and major potentially catastrophic impact.

13 There have been major advancements in weather
14 forecasting over the past several decades, but even
15 if the most skilled meteorologist, using the most
16 advanced super computers and models in the world,
17 were able to provide an accurate and precise rainfall
18 forecast, that does not mean we can perfectly locate
19 the extent and depth of flooding. This is the second
20 hydrological issue, which is an ability to identify
21 the movement, circulation, and dispersion of a storm
22 water runoff across the City's watershed.

23 Imagine, for example, taking one gallon of water
24 and pouring it out over the intersection of Broadway
25 and Park Place. We might be able to estimate where

3 the water would go, how much of it might flow across
4 the concrete towards low lying areas or seep through
5 cracks and into the soil, but it would only be an
6 educated guess. Now consider that one-inch of rain
7 falling over an acre of land equates to 27,000
8 gallons of water. When you take into account a storm
9 producing three or four inches of rain over the
10 City's nearly 200,000 acres of land, that is nearly
11 20 billion gallons of stormwater runoff. Other
12 influences also determine where flooding will occur -
13 - such as the extent of porous and nonporous
14 surfaces, extant soil moisture content, tidal levels,
15 the steepness of the terrain, and more.

16 When we consider these factors and layer them
17 onto the vast and varied landscape of New York City,
18 in addition to forecast challenges and variability of
19 heavy rainfall, you begin to understand all that we
20 take into account as we plan and respond to these
21 storms.

22 We combat these challenges in numerous ways:
23 First, we maintain an extremely close relationship
24 with the National Weather NY Forecast Office. Our
25 watch command and our in-house meteorologist, monitor
weather service discussions, products, and data

2 24/7/365, and distribute forecast information to a
3 list of over 3,200 partner contacts when inclement
4 weather is predicted. We also communicate directly
5 with The Weather Service through their online chat
6 service and through consultations we hold both
7 internally and with our City and private partners.

8 Additionally, we have had a third-party vendor
9 which provides supplemental data and support before,
10 during, and after significant events. We are also
11 working towards bringing an additional outside party
12 modeling and mapping of rainfall flood inundation,
13 which is a new and emerging field of technology and
14 data.

15 I also want to note that no two storms will ever
16 be the same. Each will leave its own unique impact on
17 the City, even if the weather patterns between storms
18 are similar. This is to say that future storms will
19 produce flooding in areas that perhaps haven't seen
20 significant flooding in the past.

21 All that said, we hope you see that New York City
22 knows a great deal about our vulnerability to rain
23 induced flooding, and has given its impacts and
24 consequences significant thought and time when
25

1 planning for those emergencies. The City first
2 released its *Flash Flood Emergency Plan* in 2009 which
3 is the most activated of all emergency plans.
4

5 Throughout the years, Emergency Management has made
6 improvements to our response strategies and
7 addressing of flood risk, especially following the
8 catastrophic events of Post-Tropical Cyclone Ida in
9 2021. These improvements include: an embedded
10 meteorologist within the agency, the hiring of a
11 third-party weather vender to supplement our
12 coordination with The Weather Service, and the
13 revamping of the Flash Flood Emergency Plan to have a
14 risk-based and scaled approach with expanded
15 strategies, utilizing and supporting of the
16 advancement of City's flood sensor network, and
17 FloodNet, to give us real time flooding information.

18 The City's Notify NYC alert system is a critical
19 tool, especially for residents living in basement
20 apartments, because these units are often more
21 susceptible to flooding and other emergency
22 situations. Receiving real time weather and emergency
23 alerts, enables those residents to make timely and
24 informed decisions, such as evacuating before
25

1 floodwaters reach dangerous levels. The system's
2 multilingual support, offering alerts in 14
3 languages, including American Sign Language, ensures
4 that critical information is accessible to the
5 diverse communities that make up our city. This City
6 service serves as a lifeline for basement dwellers,
7 giving them the crucial seconds or minutes needed to
8 protect themselves and their property in the face of
9 an emergency.
10

11 Since 2021, Emergency Management has also
12 enhanced its public warning capabilities via Notify
13 NYC, including the creation of new message types
14 encouraging rain preparedness - even if National
15 Weather Service products have not been issued - such
16 as a notification asking New Yorkers to help clear
17 catch basins. In addition to these new messages, we
18 have also increased our focus on basement apartment
19 notification and risk - including the development of
20 new Notify NYC subscription group that offers
21 targeted messaging regarding flooding in basement
22 apartments. New Yorkers interested in this
23 information can enroll in this group and, unlike
24 other groups, will receive phone calls all times of
25 day, including during overnight hours, to alert them

1 of the risk for basement flooding. All of the
2 enhancements to Notify NYC, including the new
3 basement notifications, are offered in multiple
4 languages. As always, we would appreciate any support
5 from the Council in getting the word out about these
6 new capabilities and encouraging enrollment in Notify
7 NYC, especially for our new basement alerts group, as
8 increased enrollment will assist us in reaching even
9 more vulnerable New Yorkers. We've also added flood
10 alarms as a response tool - similar to smoke alarms
11 and backed by our FEMA-led post Idi-mitigation study.
12 We have distributed alarms to New Yorkers, which they
13 can place in their basements to alert them when
14 flooding is occurring in the residence, so they know
15 when to evacuate.

17 Finally, a pivotal moment in the City of New
18 York's commitment to proactive preparedness and
19 fostering resilient communities was our recent
20 "Rising Above: Citywide Flood Preparedness Day of
21 Action & Resource Fair". Organized by Emergency
22 Management, this event took place at Diversity Plaza
23 in the heart of Queens, and was focused on providing
24 the tools and information needed to combat flooding
25 across all five boroughs, with a focus on basement

3 apartments. Our CERT volunteers played an invaluable
4 role spanning communities from Throggs Neck in the
5 Bronx to South Street Seaport in Manhattan, to canvas
6 flood vulnerable neighborhoods. These dedicated
7 individuals were not just distributing information,
8 flood alarms, and barriers, but were demonstrating
9 their use, visiting local businesses, and engaging in
10 meaningful dialogues about flood preparedness,
11 exemplifying what Commissioner Iscol refers to as a
12 "culture of resilience". This event was more than
13 symbolic; it provided actionable steps for immediate
14 implementation; therefore, reflecting the urgency of
15 the situation. Collaboration was a central theme of
16 the event. Various offices and agencies, including
17 the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental
18 Justice and the New York City Public Engagement Unit,
19 came together to advance our shared mission. Council
20 members, borough presidents, and the New York City
21 Chief Climate Officer emphasized the acute need for
22 flood preparedness and climate resilience, especially
23 as we've seen the toll taken by events like Ida and
24 Hurricane Sandy.

25 Returning to the emergency of September 29, 2023,
though it may appear to the public and the media that

2 a press conference is our first step, it's part of a
3 larger, ongoing effort of substantial preparation
4 well in advance of a weather event. This includes
5 identifying the key partners for operational
6 coordination, holding interagency calls to provide
7 situational awareness, monitoring and tracking
8 impacts to critical services and infrastructure,
9 identifying key decisions and resources needed to
10 reduce impacts from the event, and tracking key
11 actions to support the response by agency partners.
12 For the flash flood event in September, we pulled
13 response operations and capabilities from a wide
14 range of pre-existing plans based on the needs of the
15 emergency at hand. We began monitoring the potential
16 storm the previous Friday, September, 22nd and began
17 consultations with the National Weather System on
18 Wednesday afternoon at first indication of a flood
19 risk. Although the plan trigger had not yet been met,
20 we activated the Flash Flood Plan at 8:30 a.m.
21 Thursday morning, out of an abundance of caution, and
22 the Emergency Operations Center was open on Friday
23 September 29th at 6:00 a.m. with involvement from key
24 city agencies and partners including the Community
25 Affairs Unit, Con Ed, Environmental Protection, NYC

3 Public Schools, State Homeland Security And Emergency
4 Services, Transportation, Sanitation, FDNY, MTA,
5 National Weather Service, NYPD, Port Authority,
6 Parks, American Red Cross, and PSEG.

7 Our approach to communication leverages a number
8 of platforms, activated by Both Emergency Management
9 and our network of partners, to relay crucial
10 information promptly and efficiently. These platforms
11 range from Notify NYC, to social media outlets like
12 Twitter and Instagram, and additional systems like
13 the Advance Warning System, which disseminates
14 information to people with disabilities and other
15 access and functional needs. In urgent situations, a
16 unified command structure is activated comprised of
17 lead agencies and City Hall. The structure enables us
18 to amplify and coordinate messaging across a wide
19 array of agency partners, including those in the
20 private and nonprofit sectors, ensuring a
21 comprehensive and effective public response. The
22 first Notify NYC message about this event went out at
23 3:05 a.m. (*5:05 a.m. per written testimony) on
24 Wednesday and throughout the duration of this
25 emergency, we issued 71 Notify NYC messages, made 64
social media posts, held two press conferences with

3 Mayor Adams, and responded to dozens of press
4 inquiries.

5 The largest operation from the flooding was the
6 full evacuation of Woodhull Hospital in Brooklyn.
7 This required the phased transfer of 116 patients to
8 other Health + Hospitals sites which started Friday
9 night and was completed by Saturday evening. This was
10 necessary for patient and staff safety, because the
11 hospital needed to be taken off its backup generators
12 so that Con Ed could assess damage to the feeder
13 lines and make necessary repairs in addition to
14 assessing damage to their electrical and mechanical
15 equipment. The hospital was able to fully reopen on
16 October 7th. The coordination and collaboration
17 through that weekend speaks to the capabilities we
18 have in the City. Not since Sandy has there been a
19 full hospital of evacuation, let alone in short
20 notice such as this experience, and we are thankful
21 for the safe transfer of every patient through the
22 process.

23 In the aftermath of the event, we transitioned
24 into the recovery phase, rigorously working to ensure
25 services were restored where needed and evaluated the
full scope of the damage to infrastructure and

1 buildings. We coordinated with our partners to
2 execute operations like damage assessment and
3 community outreach, while tracking restorations. The
4 Report Damage Tool was newly launched this hurricane
5 season along with a revamped 311 Severe Damage Tool,
6 which links callers directly to service requests when
7 reporting damage from the event. Those tools
8 collected information, such as building damages, that
9 could be used to request state and federal recovery
10 aid or 311 service request related to the storm,
11 such a sewer backups, structural damage to buildings,
12 and heat/hot water complaints. Both tools were
13 activated in the evening of Thursday September 28th
14 in anticipation of the incoming weather. It was
15 amplified through all our social media channels,
16 Strengthening Community Networks, elected officials,
17 community boards, and further amplified by City Hall
18 and other agency partners. A citywide Notify NYC
19 message was also issued to amplify the 311 Severe
20 Damage Tool encouraging people to submit reports.

21
22 The numbers received from this tool, along with
23 reports to the Emergency Operation Center, were
24 ultimately fairly low and did not trigger recovery
25 operations such as activation of our Damage

1 Assessment Working Group, muck-out, or debris
2 cleanup. In addition, the City did not stand up
3 hotels or shelters, nor did we set up service
4 centers. The impacts were also not as severe as past
5 events in New York City that met the threshold to
6 request FEMA individual assistance for residents.
7 Reports were received in the hundreds, compared to
8 the thousands during Tropical Storm Ida. However, the
9 numbers were high enough to request the New York
10 Department of Homeland Security and Emergency
11 Services for a Small Business Administration
12 declaration, that would provide low interest loans to
13 renters, homeowners, and business owners for
14 recovery, repair, or other losses. New York
15 Department of Homeland Security and the Small
16 Business Administration, sent representatives to tour
17 damages across Brooklyn and Queens to see if the
18 boroughs met the threshold for a declaration. For
19 three days, Emergency Management escorted its state
20 and federal partners, along with community
21 organizations and business improvement districts to
22 assess the impact. Queens did not meet the
23 thresholds, but Brooklyn did. We are still awaiting
24 the final decision for the declaration.
25

3 As we have seen with other aspects of severe
4 weather, climate change, and its impacts continue to
5 pose new challenges to New York City, and city
6 agencies are working to adjust our plan and outreach
7 to New Yorkers to address this hazard. As we did for
8 this incident, we continue to pursue giving New
9 Yorkers the most up-to-date information on the
10 potential dangers from flash flooding, so they can
11 make any adjustments to their activities as
12 needed. We are already in the process of reviewing
13 our Flash Flood Emergency Plan and making
14 modifications and improvements based on lessons
15 learned from this event. For example, school
16 closures and leave policy for City employees are two
17 key decisions we are working to incorporate using
18 experience from other emergency plans where we can
19 leverage language and impacts.

20 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today;
21 we are now happy to take your questions.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I would like to note that
23 Council Members Restler, Riley, and Williams have
24 joined us.

25 I will now ask, uh, Council Member Restler to
speak on his bills.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I just firstly want to
3 earnestly thank Chair Ariola for the opportunity to
4 hear these bills today. I really appreciate it, thank
5 you. And thank you for holding this critically
6 important hearing. And thanks to Chair Brewer, and,
7 of course, thanks to the Speaker's office for their
8 leadership on this effort.

9 On both June 6th and September 29th, New Yorkers
10 encountered emergencies that were... That we were
11 entirely unprepared for, facing significant health
12 and safety risks. On both days, despite there being
13 notable warnings about the weather, the City did
14 little more than send out generic alerts and tweets.
15 There was a complete lack of comprehension
16 information and no coordinated City response to
17 protect and help New Yorkers. This cannot keep
18 happening. Our three bills address the dystopian
19 wildfire smoke that we experienced in June -
20 incidents that are new due to our new climate
21 reality, new to New Yorkers, but unfortunately all
22 too familiar to folks on the Westcoast and other
23 parts of the country and the world who have
24 experienced dystopian wildfire smoke. On that day,
25 New Yorkers didn't know how to stay safe. They

3 didn't know where to turn for information. Some of
4 our most vulnerable New Yorkers were left outside on
5 the street, because there was no care, there was no
6 direction provided to them on where to go. There was
7 confusing and conflicting advice. This has to
8 change. Our bills, these three bills, will ensure
9 that, one, we have a protocol in place before poor
10 air quality events happen, two, that we properly
11 notify the public when they do happen, and, three,
12 that we do everything we can to reduce pollution and
13 protect those that are most in need during these
14 events, including opening up Clean Air Centers and
15 providing access to shelter.

16 Introduction 1200, with 21 cosponsors, and thank
17 you to each of you, would require the commissioner of
18 the New York City Office of Emergency Management
19 (OEM) to develop and implement a comprehensive plan
20 regarding public notification during the air quality
21 emergencies, including notifying the public about how
22 to stay safe and access health information.

23 Introduction 1201, with 19 cosponsors, requires
24 that NYCEM develop an emergency response protocol for
25 unhealthy air quality events, as they are required to
do for other weather events under Local Law 24.

3 And Introduction 1199, which also has 19
4 cosponsors, would create "Spare the Air Day", days
5 for when there is poor air quality that would allow
6 the City to prohibit high emissions activities,
7 encourage people to reduce their own emissions,
8 provide access to Clean Air Centers, and ensure that
9 street homeless New Yorkers can access shelter
10 anywhere - similar to code red or code blue
11 scenarios.

12 I have a great deal of respect for Deputy
13 Commissioner Farrell and the other folks in city
14 government who have been working for years to try to
15 keep us safe during emergencies. But, our
16 experiences on June 6th and September 29th were
17 totally unacceptable, and we have to do better. Our
18 package of bills would make a critical difference to
19 ensure that New Yorkers are safe when future air
20 quality events occur. Thank you very much.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council Member
22 Restler.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay, just... Just before we
24 start ... and thank you for comprehensive testimony,
25 but, when we do have these climate emergencies, does

1
2 OEM keep a record of City residents previously
3 impacted by that weather or emergency?

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, I wouldn't
5 say that we have list of every City resident. We do,
6 like I said, we learn from every storm, and we work
7 with our partners, uh, certainly DEP and others, to
8 look at areas. And as we have seen first with, uh,
9 Ida and now with this, you know, we have spent a lot
10 of time focused on coastal storms, since that is a
11 very large risk, uh, I think you know that in your
12 district. But ,you know, Ida was really a wakeup
13 call that ,you know, climate change and other things
14 are impacting different types of flooding. So, we
15 look at all different areas, but we really, for
16 flooding, if we are talking about flash flooding, we
17 really consider the entire city at risk, and so we do
18 messaging comprehensively to different groups, and
19 look at things... And I think Kim may have more on
20 DEP's efforts.

21 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: Sure, so, inland flooding
22 is definitely one of the things that is an emerging
23 challenge for the City especially with the more
24 intense storms that we are seeing. And in 2022, we
25 released storm water maps that are on our website

2 that help New Yorkers understand their risks from
3 these more intense storms. And, so, we really
4 encourage folks to go to NYC.gov/rainfall-ready.
5 That is where you can interact with these maps, so
6 that you can understand your risk during a moderate
7 and an extreme storm and really get a block by block
8 analysis and understanding of where water tends to
9 pool and collect in these intense inland storms.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I think that the times are
11 changing, so we used to know that the Rockaway
12 Peninsula would flood or parts of Howard Beach,
13 Hamilton Beach, I am just speaking to my district or
14 ,you know, but, now, it's all of these inland areas
15 that are getting flooding, so that's an issue. And
16 just to note ,you know, that NYCEM did have for that
17 storm, uh, for the 29th, on the 28th you did have a
18 notification go out and a press release. And,
19 then... Then you had Notify NYC. And I know our
20 office was contacted. So, you do... You do work
21 with your community partners. You do work with your
22 government agency partners, and you do try and get
23 the word out as quickly as possible or as quickly as
24 we know. But, they don't call them flash storms for
25 nothing, right?

3 So, could you, and this is for NYCEM, could you
4 just describe the relevant emergency protocols for
5 flooding events caused by extreme weather, such as
6 the City's Coastal Storm Plan and Flood Emergency
7 Plan?

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Sure, so,
9 happily, we are at the end of coastal storm season
10 for this year. The City is... The Atlantic coastal
11 storm season is about six months. And, so, you know,
12 that one by far is our largest plan. We are looking
13 at storms throughout the whole season, we start to
14 track them, and when a storm looks like it may make
15 impact, have effects, off the coast of North
16 Carolina, that is when we start to do calls and look
17 at what we would have to do. For flash flooding, as
18 you have noted, it is a very different instance.
19 Like I said in my testimony, for this storm, even
20 though we knew it was coming, there was no indication
21 that there would be any type of flooding or excessive
22 fall until that Wednesday morning and even until like
23 Thursday afternoon. We had a lot of rain this year.
24 If people remember, I think it rained like seven or
25 eight weekends in a row. And, so ,you know, we are
activating the Flash Flood Plan basically every

1 weekend. And ,you know, Thursday afternoon, and
2 getting into that evening, is when the predictions of
3 ,you know, very, very large amounts of rainfall
4 started to come. The first thing we do, as we said
5 is ,you know, we have our meteorologist, who is
6 always looking at everything, talking to The Weather
7 Service, we start internal consults, and then we
8 reach out to all our partners. Because they are the
9 subject matter experts of their areas, they, as
10 people probably know, New York City is 250 employees
11 in a city of 300,000 employees. And, so ,you know, we
12 lead coordination, but obviously DEP, Transportation,
13 Parks, Fire, Police, you know, they have many
14 thousands of employees, and they know the actions
15 that they take when we activate the Flash Flood Plan
16 - things like clearing out the catch basins, you
17 know, I am sure the chief can talk about ,you know,
18 the staffing that they put in place and the training
19 that his officers have been through. So, they are
20 related the two, but ,you know, coastal storms, we
21 have much more notice. It is ,you know, if we are
22 doing a coastal storm evacuation, if people remember
23 back to Sandy, that encompasses brining in the
24 emergency stock pile, closing schools, outfitting
25

3 schools as emergency shelters, potentially evacuating
4 hospitals ,you know, it is a huge, huge undertaking.
5 Flash floods are a very different animal.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And it is your agency that
7 coordinates with all the other agencies, so they are
8 giving you regular updates during the course of the
9 day?

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: They are. So,
11 we send out all of our consults. A lot of times
12 people may know that there's weather coming in
13 tomorrow night. And so starting, just for example,
14 this past Friday, we started consults on Saturday,
15 but this past Friday morning, we sent out updated
16 weather report looking at all of the risk, because we
17 know how it may impact with holiday travel; we know
18 how it may impact with the Thanksgiving Day Parade,
19 so we are in constant contact with the agencies,
20 giving them information, you know, answering any
21 questions. And, then, for example, this weather
22 coming in tomorrow, we started consults with the
23 agency this past Saturday, so we did them yesterday
24 and Saturday. We are doing another one today. And,
25 then, we will set up larger calls when need be. But,
it is an ongoing... Because we're also not just

3 talking to them about weather. Obviously, there are
4 many other emergencies going on across the City. So
5 ,you know, we have tried and true liaisons, we have
6 secondary, tertiary lesions. And, so, we are talking
7 to them through our watch command, through our on
8 call teams, through our executive leadership, pretty
9 much all day and all night long.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And how does that overlap
11 differ based on a flash flooding or caused by heavy
12 rainfall, or a large climate event, or a fire?

13 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, we will
14 set up the calls, and the calls ,you know, they
15 are... It is usually the same agencies, the
16 operational agencies in the City are the operational
17 agencies. You know, we will add on additional
18 agencies. As Council Member Restler noted ,you know,
19 after the air quality days in June, we ,you know,
20 DCAS is not always on our calls, historically, they
21 would be on coastal storm calls, but they wouldn't,
22 for example, always be on severe heat. Because the
23 impacts within DCAS have not been that great. Since
24 we are looking at City worker health and safety, we
25 have added DCAS to all of our calls. So ,you know,
we have lesions in every single city agency in all of

1 the private sector partners, the state's, and the
2 fed's, so we will add, uhm, agencies as we see a
3 need. And, uhm ,you know, we are doing the calls all
4 of the time. We are happy to have all of the partners
5 there with us. And, so, then, we just take it...
6 And usually we will do one or two calls a day, but if
7 it seems like, uh ,you know, we need to do more.. If
8 something like a fire that is more field operations,
9 that is something more that we would do interagency
10 meetings, which would be led by our Citywide Incident
11 Coordinators, and we would have fire commanders,
12 police ,you know, other agencies there to deal with
13 the impacts of fires and other types... watermain
14 breaks, those of type of things, that happens more on
15 the ground.

17 CHIEF ESPOSITO: Good morning...

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Good morning.

19 CHIEF ESPOSITO: Specific to the September 29th
20 rain event, the NYCEM, in the days before, had their
21 planning... had planning meetings where they give us
22 the forecast. They give us all the information they
23 have on it, and then we look at that and size up what
24 the risk is. So, for the September 29th event, there
25 was no prediction for coastal flooding. It was not

1 predicted to be a wind event. Our risk indicated
2 urban flooding, a lot of rain. I think the forecast,
3 the last forecast I saw was up to five inches of
4 rain. So, that was the additional equipment,
5 additional resources that we staffed for was to deal
6 with the urban flooding. If it were predicted to be
7 coastal storm or heavy winds, maybe knocking down
8 trees, we would add resources to deal with the downed
9 trees or the coastal flooding. So, NYCEM gives us all
10 of that information, and then we increase the
11 staffing based on that specific risk or threat.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you, Chief.

14 And what conditions warrant an Emergency Weather
15 Declaration? And when that is declared, what actions
16 are contemplated when that weather emergency is
17 declared?

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, an
19 emergency declaration, there are several reasons why
20 we do that. As we know, we had already activated the
21 Flash Flood Plan ,you know, we had sent out many
22 notifications and had done other actions. A lot
23 times for an emergency declaration, first of all, it
24 is for people to understand how serious an event is.
25 You know, New Yorkers are intrepid, uh, much like the

1 council member mentioned, they want to get where
2 they're going. And ,you know, like I said, it was
3 raining every week, so people are not necessarily
4 going to stay home for rain the way they might, uhm,
5 for a blizzard or another severe weather event. So,
6 part of it is to show ,you know, that this is a very
7 serious situation, and people need to take it
8 seriously to stay safe. It also can help if there
9 are any emergency type of purchasing needed or
10 anything else that has to happen. And, then, also,
11 when we are, like I said, for this storm, we spoke to
12 the state, we spoke to the feds. It was nowhere
13 close meeting the FEMA declarations, but we don't
14 want to make that decision, we want that to come
15 through their process. And ,you know, having a state
16 of emergency can help us in that process.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. I know there was a lot
19 of back and forth about the schools on that day. And
20 we have a lot schools on the peninsula that had to be
21 ,you know, children had to be picked up at some point
22 during the course of the day. Was there any contact
23 during that contacting of other agencies with the
24 DOE? And was there a reason why they didn't decide
25 to ,you know, even have a delayed arrival?

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I will talk to
3 the contact part, and, then, I'll ask John Shea to
4 talk about their operations.

5 So, Department of Education or New York City
6 Public Schools, that is another agency that literally
7 we are touch with every day due to the large number
8 of students and employees. We were speaking to the
9 Department of Education on Thursday ,you know,
10 alerting them to the fact that there was going to be
11 rain, and a lot of rain. And, then, they, as I
12 mentioned, they were in our Emergency Operations
13 Center on Friday. I was talking with their emergency
14 managers as there was some, uhm, they did get some
15 water in school basements in some areas, you know,
16 asking if they needed resources or anything. The
17 Department of Education is very well resourced. They
18 didn't need anything from us. But we stayed in touch
19 also as they looked at their damage. Happily, I
20 believe there wasn't any infrastructure damage, very
21 different than how Ida was. But, we do stay in touch
22 with them every step of the way. But, I will defer
23 the rest to John.

24 CHIEF SHEA: Sure, thank you, Deputy Commissioner,
25 and thank you for the question, Chair Ariola.

2 So, as the deputy commissioner mentioned, DOE
3 does participate in all of the NYCEM calls when we
4 have this citywide events. And we participated in the
5 calls for the ones for this particular storm, and at
6 the time, there was nothing that we saw that was any
7 reason to either cancel school or move to remote.
8 And I want to remind the Council that moving to
9 remote or canceling school is not a decision that we
10 take lightly. The services that students get, not
11 just education, but hot meals and a safe place to be
12 is very important to us as well. It is a disruption
13 to families when we make those decisions. So we do
14 everything we can in our power to make sure that we
15 keep schools open as often as possible. But, we
16 certainly don't want to put them, uh, put students or
17 staff in difficult situation, but we didn't think
18 that the storm, in this case, warranted that
19 decision.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, hind sight being 20/20,
21 and that the storm was much worse than we had
22 anticipated, would you critically think that out a
23 little differently when another storm is approaching?

24 CHIEF SHEA: Sure, so, thank you, your comments
25 about the communication piece are absolutely on

1
2 point. And we are using that as an opportunity, and
3 the chancellor is committed to an After Action Report
4 to review this. And we have already committed to
5 sharing that with the Council. But, in retrospect, I
6 don't believe that we would have made a different
7 decision with regards to remote. All of our schools
8 did remain safe. There were a number of instances
9 where if there was water in the basement or on the
10 first floor, we had to move students up to a higher
11 floor temporarily until that water receded, and then
12 we were able to clean it up with our custodial staff.
13 But, every... There was only one school, which is
14 K3-12 I believe, in District 22, that we needed to
15 evacuate to a differ site, because there was water in
16 the... it was transformer in the boiler room that
17 got wet. And we did relocate those students, but
18 that was the only school where we felt that we needed
19 to move students for a safety issue.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you, I appreciate that.
21 I yield now to Council Member Brewer.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

23 One of my questions is, why the press conference
24 was late? Because, I understand that you had to ,you
25 know, six o'clock in the morning, you're there, and

3 at that point, of course, you are putting the pieces
4 together. Because, I have been to the OEM Center,
5 and I know how impressive it is with the incredible
6 technology that goes with it. But, according to a
7 memo that I have here, there was a lot of activity,
8 by you, positively, before the 12 noon press
9 conference. I just was wanting to understand why it
10 was late - at least from what it seems to me.
11 Because it looks to me like you were doing lots of...
12 I happen to have a memo here, which I have, uh, that
13 lists all of the different things you were doing
14 before the noon press conference. So, can you
15 explain that to me?

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, we did not
17 do an independent press conference. That came
18 through City Hall. What we did do, Commissioner
19 Iscol and myself, and other staff members we have
20 that speak languages other than English, we were
21 doing lots of individual media ,you know, to get to
22 New Yorkers right where they are. So, things like
23 1010 WINS, NY1, Noticias, you know, all different
24 individual things like that, and speaking about the
25 conditions at that moment. As I also mentioned, we
did do a press release that evening. I know that we

2 sent it to the Council, and I got it through your
3 Listserv, so I know that many council members also
4 shared that. But, your point is well taken. We can,
5 in events like this, uhm ,you know, communication is
6 key, and, so, we are looking at... and I think
7 people probably saw that the next week, when we did
8 face rain, not the same amount, but there was an
9 early press conference in our headquarters....

10 [CROSS-TALK]

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Very early. Yes, we were
12 [INAUDIBLE]... [CROSS-TALK]

13 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: on Friday at..
14 Friday at two o'clock.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah, well I am just saying,
16 it was like, over, with all due respect, and that was
17 fine, it felt like it was overdrive, because of the
18 previous timeframe. So, I guess what I am trying to
19 say, despite all of the work that you did
20 individually, it's... the press goes where the mayor
21 is, and that would have made more sense. I'm not
22 saying it's your fault. I am just saying that is
23 what I would have suggested.

24 I do want to go back to the schools, though.
25 Because, it is my understanding, because of the...

1 and this is MTA more than anything else, that you
2 could get to school, but it was very hard to get back
3 - three hours, four hours were the stories that I
4 heard. So, how will that influence, in the future,
5 your thought to... I don't think schools should be
6 closed except for the most drastic situations, but if
7 you don't have the pieces to get the transportation,
8 no matter how great it is as a learning institution,
9 you can't... So, how are you going to think about
10 that for the future? That seemed to be, to me, that
11 was the biggest problem - getting home from wherever
12 you were at, because nobody knew in the morning that
13 it was going to be a big problem.

14
15 CHIEF SHEA: Sure, and that is a great question,
16 thank you, Chair Brewer.

17 And as I have mentioned earlier, I think it is
18 always, and as the Deputy Commissioner has testified,
19 every storm is a little different when it comes to a
20 rain event like this. So, the impact is different
21 depending on where you are in the city. The Office of
22 Pupil Transportation is part of the communications
23 when we have the calls with NYCEM and our own
24 internal communications. So they are aware of the
25 up-to-date information as it comes through. And just

1
2 like anything else, we make decisions on the
3 transportation based on the information that have at
4 the time. So, I think as part of our review of this,
5 we will definitely look at what the transportation
6 was on the pickup side and see if there were things
7 that we can learn from with that and do better on for
8 sure.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, now, I did mention
10 Notify NYC, and I understand it. I have to say, I
11 think it is around a million people - I remember
12 from a previous hearing - who are signed up for it.
13 So my question is, are there... Do you think it is
14 an adequate tool? Do you think there are
15 possibilities for growth? Do you think that we can
16 get more people signed up? Do you think it is a
17 realistic method of communication? And I know that
18 we don't have much else right now, but, I have to
19 say, from my perspective, as somebody who is a user,
20 ,you know, somebody in Nyack getting... missing
21 persons that is what I see a lot of. And, so, I do
22 tend to tune it out. So, for something like this, I
23 would have preferred some kind of an alert that was
24 much more significant than what we got. Go ahead?

1
2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, to
3 address, uh, your first point, the reason that we
4 send so many missing persons alerts, is because back
5 in a City Council, during the Bloomberg years, the
6 Council passed legislation mandating us to send every
7 missing person in the City to every Notify NYC
8 subscriber.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: We agree that
11 that, you know, if someone is missing in the South
12 Shore of Staten Island, uh, people in Riverdale might
13 or might not need that information... [CROSS-TALK]

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I pay them no attention
15 whatsoever. I will be honest with you... [CROSS-
16 TALK]

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, we are
18 very... Uh, I don't know if it is Chairperson
19 Ariola's committee or a different one, but we would
20 be very happy to work to amend that legislation,
21 because we are bound by the legislation that was put
22 in place several years ago to send so many missing
23 persons alerts citywide. The technology evolved
24 since then, so that is something that we can
25 definitely follow up on. Because that is something,

2 uhm ,legislation that we are following. But, if it
3 is not effective anymore, we are happy to change
4 that. Because, it is honestly a lot of work for our
5 team as well.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

7 [INAUDIBLE]...[CROSS-TALK]

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Uh, talking...

9 [CROSS-TALK]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But, go ahead, I want to
11 hear more about even without having as many, there
12 still needs to be a better response. Go ahead.

13 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, speaking
14 about Notify NYC, we have just shy of 1.2 million
15 subscribers. As I mentioned it is available in 14
16 languages, including sign language. I would say that
17 the vast majority of subscribers do subscribe in
18 English. You know, so, one of our main goals is to
19 increase the subscribership across the board, but,
20 also, specifically in languages other than English.
21 But ,you know, we do... We check the subscriber
22 numbers every week, and we do a lot of different
23 things to get those numbers up. As people may know,
24 we have a longstanding relationship with the Ad
25 Council. For the first time ever, our Ad Council

2 campaign this year focuses on Notify NYC. The ads
3 are just coming out now, and they are in English and
4 Spanish. We are happy to share them. And the Ad
5 Council, we are a small agency with a relatively
6 small budget ,you know, our advertising budget is not
7 as large as some other agencies, but having the Ad
8 Council allows us to have ,you know, a much broader
9 reach with those ads. They go on tv, they go on radio
10 all across, so that is one thing. You know, something
11 else that is... what we always see, is after an
12 event, we see a large uptick. And, so, we work with
13 City Hall, we work with other agencies to mention it.
14 We call them teachable moments - when people are
15 focused. You know, that is another great place where
16 the Council, if willing, could work with us. We do
17 subscriber drives, so we go out to all different
18 kinds of events throughout the year and encourage
19 people to sign up. But, and, as I mentioned earlier,
20 we still do phone calls. So, people can get on their
21 landline ,you know, especially for the citywide
22 alerts for things that are time sensitive, because,
23 in the middle of the night, a text or an email is not
24 necessarily going to wake you up.

25 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

1
2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: We agree that
3 we want to have other ways to get the word out. We
4 are looking... We would like to look at WhatsApp
5 channels, especially for people that don't speak
6 English as ,you know, Twitter or X or other social
7 media may not be, uh, what they use. So, we are
8 open. I mean, our job is to alert every New Yorker
9 ,you know, every time that there is something serious
10 going on. So, Notify is a great tool. I would just
11 say with the 1.2 million subscribers, hopefully many
12 of you are subscribers, the press are subscribers,
13 nonprofits, so, you know, we see that information
14 amplified across the board. So, the 1.2 million ,you
15 know, can become two and three million messages.
16 But, we are also open to other ways that we can get
17 the message out. The Department of Transportation
18 will do variable message boards. The LinkNYC kiosk
19 will put the message up. You know, there are many,
20 many different ways to get the message out, and we
21 are always looking for new channels... [CROSS-TALK]

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, I think that is a
23 discussion to be had certainly. I think WhatsApp is a
24 good idea, that's for sure.

1 The analysis post was done, I think by the first
2 deputy mayor, that is my understanding. And I just
3 was wondering, did somebody assess the damage to
4 private property that resulted from the flooding on
5 September 29th? And what other kinds of... You
6 mentioned some of it in your testimony, but what are
7 other kinds of assessments - you, Fire Department,
8 and others did in order to not have this happen in
9 the future? Can you be specific?

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, for the
12 private buildings, as I mentioned, we do have the
13 Damage Assessment Tool. The Housing Recovery Office,
14 HRO, retooled... We have had a Damage Assessment
15 Tool for a while, but the Housing Recovery Office did
16 a really great job this year, uh, making it much more
17 robust and much more user friendly. We pushed that
18 out through many different channels, through the
19 media, through electives, through Notify, other
20 agencies to encourage everyone who had any type of
21 damage to call 311 and report. And, then, uhm, HRO
22 followed up on all of those reports. As you can
23 imagine, there were some duplicates. Also, people
24 will not always report water in their basement. They
25 clean up the water, you know, and, so that is not an

1 actionable report. But, we did go, in the weeks
2 after, around to different locations that were
3 reported to see what type of damage there was. I
4 think, uhm, you know, based on the timing of this
5 storm... Ida mostly happened overnight but this storm
6 happened later in the day, so it was very disruptive
7 to people's commutes. But, it was also not a time
8 when people were asleep or not aware. So ,you know,
9 the public schools, all of their custodians were
10 already in place, it didn't happen in the summer the
11 way that Ida did, so they were able to get on it
12 quickly and fix whatever repairs had to be done.
13 But, we really didn't see the infrastructure damage
14 that we saw during Hurricane Ida. We also did, in
15 Emergency Management, in cooperation with OMB, talked
16 to all city agencies to see, after Ida, I mean, I
17 walked through many firehouses, many schools, many
18 other City buildings that had very serious damage.
19 There wasn't that... Happily, there wasn't that
20 level of damage with this storm.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: In terms of schools, it says
23 here 560 schools were impacted. So, I am wondering
24 if, obviously, it is true that the school custodians
25 were there, that's a good thing. But, still, to be

1
2 all honest ,you know, these wonderful principals and
3 custodians don't always get the support they need to
4 do they follow up - when there's damage - nice to
5 have somebody there. So, my question is, what has
6 been your after September 29th report? What are we
7 doing about the schools who were impacted? And,
8 again, are you part of whatever import is decided
9 upon for thinking about what to do about the future?
10 Because the schools are really important.

11 CHIEF SHEA: Sure, uh, thank you for that. So,
12 you are correct, 560 buildings did report some sort
13 of water ingress, but that did not mean damage. We
14 had 403 buildings that needed some extra level of
15 support. And most of that was probably additional
16 custodial labor to help with cleaning up the water.
17 But, some of that is going to be for outside
18 contractors or somebody to come in and help with a
19 repair that the custodial staff could not manage
20 themselves.

21 But, over the grand scope of our portfolio, that
22 was really not a large dollar volume of repairs that
23 were required or cleanup that was required.

24 And, to answer your question, yes, we are
25 definitely... We are working on the After Action

2 Report, it is not complete yet, but when it is,
3 again, we committed to share that with the Council.
4 And we are a part of the City's planning going
5 forward.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. And, the same thing
7 back to, I guess, uh, Emergency Management, with the
8 City buildings, DCAS and so on, are they also trying
9 to figure out whatever happened, so that it doesn't
10 happen in the future? I know the courthouses are
11 also... They have leaks no matter what, whether it
12 is raining or not, it seems to be... In terms of the
13 Bronx Courthouse in particular. So, I always like to
14 think that maybe this is an opportunity to do what's
15 not normally done. So, my question is, those
16 buildings that are public that were damaged, you have
17 a list of them, you're figuring out what to do about
18 them? What's the status? How do you go about making
19 sure it doesn't happen again? And, not you, but DCAS
20 has to put the Bronx Courthouse on their list.

21 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: We will follow
22 up on the Bronx Courthouse.

23 For the agencies, they know their buildings best,
24 obviously, and what capital repairs and what other
25 repairs they have going on. You know, we did do

1 coordination, looking to see if this would...

2
3 Because, there is individual assistance with FEMA
4 that goes to homeowners. And, then, there's public
5 assistance, which goes to city agencies. You know, we
6 did look, there was damage, I think, at the Prospect
7 Park Zoo, definitely to Woodhull Hospital, small
8 damage at schools. Again, we didn't rise to the
9 level of a FEMA declaration, but ,you know, across
10 the board, city agencies are committed to repairing
11 their buildings and learning about... We also do a
12 lot... There is a lot resiliency money that is
13 coming out of FEMA. There is building resilient
14 infrastructure, uh, the BRIC Program, which Emergency
15 Management, our resiliency arm, works with city
16 agencies on technical assistance for these grants,
17 and a lot of this is hardening difference facilities,
18 looking at, as we build new facilities, building them
19 stronger. So, obviously, those are longer term goals
20 but important ones to safeguard the City and our
21 property.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, I just have one dollar
23 question. I think in your testimony you mentioned
24 that you are going to be hiring another consultant to
25 think about whether, in the future... we have a

3 budget crisis, do you really need this other
4 consultant?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I think ,you
6 know, by evidence that we are sitting here today, we
7 do want as many, uh, tools as we can have. I think
8 also people can appreciate that while our
9 meteorologist is terrific, he also needs to sleep and
10 go on vacation once in a while. So, we don't want to
11 ,you know, be caught flatfooted. We are also working
12 with the National Weather Service... One thing I
13 should mention, that for this storm - and for others
14 - we actually had a National Weather Service
15 forecaster embedded with us in person on that Friday,
16 which was terrific for our meteorologist, uh, because
17 there was a lot going on. And, obviously, two sets of
18 eyes are better than one. So, we are talking to the
19 Weather Service about how we can do that more
20 regularly. But, we also are ,you know, good
21 custodians of our resources, and, so, we are looking
22 at how to do it in a fiscally responsible way.

23 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, and that's a nice
24 answer. My answer will be, we have a budget crisis,
25 and I am going to look at every single contract that
the City's considering, and say, no. Because, we

3 have to focus on people who need food stamps and
4 public assistance, and food, and schools. So, I'll
5 just let you know, before you go signing that
6 contract, think about some other things. Thank you
7 very much.

8 I know Council Member Joseph is here, and she
9 does have questions.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay, but we have a list.
11 So, we are going to start with Council Member Holden,
12 followed by Council Member Hanif.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, Chairs, and
14 thank you Deputy Commissioner, for your testimony,
15 and the panel.

16 I have a few questions. I will ask them all at
17 once, because my time is limited.

18 You mentioned that OEM is able to engage New
19 Yorkers via Notify NYC, but that requires people to
20 sign up for the platform. I mean, does OEM have a
21 tool or a service that does proactive outreach, for
22 instance? Not a day goes by that I don't get a cold
23 call, a robocall, that says they want to buy my
24 house. Uhm, why can't we pinpoint neighborhoods and
25 do a robocall warning people, you know, batten down
the hatches! Let's be proactive here. If you live in

2 a basement apartment, get out. Because... Or at
3 least monitor it.

4 And I will ask my second part now. You are aware
5 of the City of Yes, right? That kind of... And,
6 some people in Queens are really upset at this, this
7 whole idea of let's put more dwelling units, let's
8 put ,you know, make garages into homes, let's make
9 basement apartments into apartments, like, living...
10 more people living in the basement. Most people
11 know, who live in Queens, that we are experiencing
12 serious flooding now. Normal storms, not hurricanes,
13 normal thunderstorms, we get flooded. Now, the
14 infrastructure, we are way behind, we are going to go
15 into probably the next 75 years of trying to upgrade
16 the sewer system, especially in my district. I have
17 experienced... I think my district experienced the
18 most deaths in Hurricane Ida. Now we are being told
19 on one hand, let's increase the density, let's pave
20 over our lawns, let's put more dwelling units, let's
21 do put people in a confined space, let's put people
22 in basements, and, then, we're going to worry about
23 what happens - we're going to notify to get out of
24 the basement. I mean, this is... It's... I have a
25 terrible... I have the most blackouts, I think, of

2 any district, the 30th District, because our grid is
3 so... our electric grid is so bad. Yet, they are
4 saying that everybody is going to switch over to
5 electric. I mean, this... This whole plan is
6 ridiculous. First of all, City of Yes, it is almost
7 dumb. To do this before we fix the infrastructure, I
8 mean, does anybody ,you know, certainly at OEM,
9 understand that this could be disaster waiting to
10 happen if we are going to implement City of Yes, as
11 it's thrown out now?

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Thank you
13 for those questions. So, for your first question, and
14 people have probably experienced this, we do have...
15 at Emergency Management, we can send out wireless
16 emergency alerts known as WEAs, that is when your
17 phone ,you know, if you didn't sign up for those, if
18 your phone is enabled, which most phones are, it will
19 buzz and light up at the same time and give you a
20 life safety warning. For this storm, the Weather
21 Service, who is another partner that can send those
22 alerts, they did send out WEAs across the city on
23 Friday morning, because we were in a flash flood
24 emergency. You know, we did not send any Wireless
25 Emergency Alerts connected to that storm, because we

3 did not see that we were in an area of life safety
4 the way we were... We did send Wireless Emergency
5 Alerts during Hurricane Ida. We don't have the
6 ability to do widescale robocalls. There are... The
7 last time we had checked into it, there were some
8 ,you know, privacy and spamming and other concerns.
9 But, we do ,you know, one thing that we have been
10 putting in place since COVID, and we did activate
11 them during this storm, is our Strengthening
12 Community. So, Emergency Management has identified
13 37 umbrella groups across the City in all different
14 boroughs. We have trained them, and we are able to
15 give them grants when they do activate to help us.
16 So, for this storm, we did activate all our
17 Strengthening Community networks, and those are
18 nonprofits and other groups, that once we activate
19 them, they, as you were mentioning, they do make
20 phone calls, they will go door to door, they do...
21 they know their communities ,you know, way better
22 than we do, block by block. And they will ,you know,
23 share the messages, let them know about recovery.
24 But, we, as I mentioned before, we are always looking
25 for me ways to speak to people and to get them the
information that they need.

3 As of the City of Yes, that is not something that
4 Emergency Management is directly involved in, but as,
5 uhm, you know, plans change, as, I mean, I am sure
6 that Fire and DEP, because it affects their fire
7 [TIMER CHIMES] rescue, and it affects their
8 infrastructure , but, for us, as we look at plans,
9 and we bring all of our partners together, you know,
10 we do look at, do we need to update the hurricane
11 evacuation zones? Do we need to coordinate with
12 agencies for more resources.... [CROSS-TALK]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Well, if you are saying
14 your agency is not involved in the City of Yes, that
15 seems to be kind of, uhm, actually, like, we are not
16 preparing properly. Because, you are going to deal on
17 the backend, which we will have more people - if this
18 goes through - if even a portion of it goes through,
19 we are going to have more people in ADUs (Accessory
20 Dwelling Unit), we are going to have more people in
21 basements, in cellars, more people packed in, more
22 flooding, more concrete. So, this is actually going
23 to make it worse, especially in neighborhoods of
24 Queens. I would like to know... And, again, it is
25 caused by over development. It really is. So, we
want to further develop, in a tighter area, and not

2 take care of the obviously, the electrical grid, not
3 take care of the sewer system. You have to see how
4 many people in my district, after a storm, we are not
5 talking about a hurricane, we are talking about a
6 thunderstorm, and have sewer backup, because it is
7 going to take decades to fix the sewer system. And,
8 then, we want to add more ADUs, and we want to add
9 more people to areas that don't have the
10 infrastructure. So, the fact that your agency is not
11 involved in this kind of speaks to this whole City of
12 Yes plan. That is how crazy it is to people who live
13 in a flood area. And it's not only just the coastal
14 areas of Queens, it is every - almost every district
15 in Queens, thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you, Council Member.

17 Council Member Hanif has left, so we will move to
18 Council Member Schulman, and, then Joseph.

19 (PAUSE)

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Hi, good morning, uhm,
21 so I have a few questions. One, is, uh, I just want
22 to return back a little bit to the robocalls. I
23 know... I know there are a lot of issues about spam,
24 and there's been regulations and all of that, if
25 there is any legislation that would assist you, that

2 we can push with congress, because I know that this
3 is a congressional issue, can you let us know?

4 Because, I think that is really important, especially
5 in terms of people... protecting their lives, so
6 that's one question. The other question is, uhm, for
7 FEMA monies, for all of the flooding and everything
8 else, do you know how much we asked for, the City
9 asked for in FEMA funds?

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, for your
11 first question, we will definitely look into that,
12 and I appreciate that. One thing I would say, we...
13 The FCC, which regulates the Wireless Emergency
14 Alerts, right now, they are available in English and
15 Spanish. They are only available in Spanish, in our
16 opinion, because of really strong advocacy that
17 Emergency Management and what the emergency
18 management agencies across the country did to really
19 compel the cellphone carriers to give them out in
20 Spanish. They have introduced comments, which we are
21 in the process of drafting comments on, that they
22 want to potentially have WEAs in many additional
23 languages, which can become complicated with
24 characters and different things. But, uhm ,you know,

1
2 that was really... We were super excited a few weeks
3 ago when saw that that is ongoing...

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Mm-hmm?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: because we
6 don't just want people to get information in English
7 and Spanish. We want them to get it in Russian, and
8 Chinese, and... [CROSS-TALK]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Right.

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: and
11 [INAUDIBLE], Urdu. So, that is one thing that will
12 take a while, but ,you know, that is moving in the
13 right direction.

14 And, then, for your second question, we don't ask
15 for specific amounts of money. We have to meet
16 certain thresholds citywide... or statewide, and,
17 then, also, for specific boroughs, because they do it
18 by county.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: And, so, we
21 looked, we worked with the state. You know, the
22 issue is that it has to be uninsured. And, you know,
23 some places have insurance, and so we didn't meet the
24 thresholds for this storm.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Is there anything that
3 would help us meet the thresholds moving forward? I
4 am just curious.

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I mean, we
6 don't really want... [CROSS-TALK]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: That... That...

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: to meet the
9 thresholds, because that means... [CROSS-TALK]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Oh, okay... [CROSS-
11 TALK]

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: we have spent
13 a lot of money... [CROSS-TALK]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay, yeah, no I get
15 it... [CROSS-TALK]

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: yeah...
17 [CROSS-TALK]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: I am just trying to...
19 I am just trying to figure out, especially with the
20 budget cuts that we are hearing about and everything
21 else, that we are getting what is owed to us by the
22 federal government apart from other things.

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Yeah, I know,
24 for sure. Uh ,you know, one thing I can say, and we
25 can talk more about this, is, as I mentioned, the

2 BRIC and the resiliency grants, there is a lot...
3 Because what is going to solve this, how ever long it
4 takes, is ,you know, improved infrastructure, is
5 building better buildings smarter ,you know, giving
6 DEP and others the tools to improve our
7 infrastructure. And the real money in that comes,
8 obviously out of Washington. And, so ,you know, the
9 more advocacy... The City has been doing well, the
10 Deputy Mayor for Operations has a federal taskforce,
11 which we sit on, uh, my partners here sit on, lots of
12 agencies, but, uh ,you know, we send a lot of money
13 to Washington. We agree, we could get more back.
14 So, we are really happy to talk to you about that in
15 more detail... [CROSS-TALK]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And there is also an
17 infrastructure bill I know that my congresswoman and
18 others, Grace Meng, was part of to make sure that New
19 York City actually gets some of these funds.
20 Because, very often what happens is it goes to the
21 state...

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Mm-hmm

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: and, then, we never see
24 it. So, to the extent that we can be helpful here...
25 [CROSS-TALK]

3 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Mm-hmm!

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: as members of the
5 Council, uh, going back just for two seconds to the
6 robocalls, very often the phone carriers come to us
7 as council members to ask us for help with things, so
8 if there is a way, that we can go back to them and
9 say, hey, we need x, y, and z for Emergency
10 Management, we are willing, I think, to do that...

11 [CROSS-TALK]

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Great...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: So, we should have that
14 conversation.

15 And, also, is there, uhm, in going back to what
16 Chair Brewer was talking about in terms of all of the
17 different notifications about missing individuals and
18 things that may not be relevant to us, is there... I
19 know there are some services, like, there is a way to
20 sign up for specific notifications. You probably...
21 I don't know if the system is sophisticated enough to
22 do that, but if there is a way to do that, that might
23 be helpful. I mean, I know citywide, there may be
24 some emergency where we all get an alert, but,
25 otherwise, we could sign up for different things?
So, maybe that is something to look at as well. And,

2 especially with, I know the City is looking at AI a
3 little bit, maybe that is something that could help
4 with that.

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: No, for sure.
6 So, we, uhm, the way Notify NYC works, everyone is
7 signed up for the emergency.... [CROSS-TALK]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Right.

9 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: alerts. So,
10 that is ,you know, people were receiving citywide
11 emergency alerts on September 29th. But, after that,
12 you can customize it. You know, you can get, thanks
13 to work we did with Chairwoman Ariola last year, you
14 can now get Shark Notifications... attacks...

15 [CROSS-TALK]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay. [TIMER CHIMES]

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: There are...
18 You can get beach closures. You can get public health
19 emergencies, transportation, all kinds of things. I
20 have to go back and look, it is my understanding,
21 and, when... Again, when we set up this... with the
22 Silver Alerts and sending those out, uhm, that was,
23 like, 2011 - 2012. So, the City... The system was
24 not as sophisticated as it is now. But, I think the
25 legislation that we follow reads that every Silver

2 Alert has to go to all Notify NYC subscribers. It was
3 very well-meaning, but I think ,you know, it might be
4 time, or maybe we could change it to borough-wide,
5 uh, something that would be ,you know, would work
6 better.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Because ,you
9 know, and this, uh, a very, uhm, nuanced point, but,
10 you know, we... Every time it is going to rain, we
11 can't send 30 notifications. Because, as Chairperson
12 Brewer has said, after the first couple, people will
13 turn... [CROSS-TALK]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Right.

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: it off. They
16 will unsubscribe. Uh, people unsubscribe from the
17 wireless emergency alerts. Unfortunately, you can go
18 on your iPhone, swipe, and you're not getting the
19 alerts anymore. So, there is a fine line to try to
20 figure out how to notify people and give them
21 actionable information and not give them so much that
22 they just turn us off.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: No, uhm... [CROSS-TALK]
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2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: If we can do
3 that with a Silver Alerts, we would be happy to
4 explore that.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: No, I appreciate it.
6 And I also just want to end my questioning by saying
7 that you guys do a terrific job. But, whatever we
8 can do to be helpful to make that even better and
9 enhance that, we would love to. So, thank you.

10 [CROSS-TALK]

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Council Member Joseph?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you, Chairs.

14 Good afternoon, my question is, how are you using
15 technology and data in emergency planning to enhance
16 flood response efforts?

17 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: Thank you, good morning,
18 and thank you for that question. So, we are doing a
19 lot of looking at the data that comes in from
20 multiple different avenues. And, so, one thing that
21 you might be aware of is that we have launched the
22 FloodNet, which provides real time sensors for flood
23 levels on city streets. And, so, during the storm,
24 we were sitting in our headquarters, actively
25 monitoring that, and seeing, okay, there is...

2 FloodNet is showing us that we have ,you know, 27
3 inches of flooding in this location, we are using
4 that to help us deploy crews on a priority basis. We
5 are also using historical information about 3-1-1
6 complaints, as well as our new modeling data that we
7 have from the stormwater maps to help us understand
8 where there are chronic areas, and making sure that
9 we are deploying our resources to be resolving things
10 that we can actually make a difference of.

11 So, if we know that the reason that a particular
12 street is flooding is because it is also an
13 extraordinarily high tide at the exact same moment as
14 heavy rain, we know that sending a crew out there is
15 not actually a good use resources, because the only
16 thing that you can do in that exact moment is wait
17 for the tide to recede.

18 However, if see that there is major flooding on
19 the FDR Drive at 95th Street, we know that that is
20 not a tidally influenced location. And, so, we are
21 using data to help us understand how to prioritize
22 crew deployments, so that we can ensure that we are
23 responding to the places where we can have the most
24 impact, and so that we can restore services to New
25 Yorkers as soon as possible.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you for that. Also,
3 I wanted to talk about the Prospect show up. I
4 represent Prospect Park, and I also represent
5 Kensington. They were under water. And they have
6 been under water for a long time, because of a few
7 things that they were told - because I just had a
8 town hall meeting with the constituents - the
9 catchment basins, how often are they cleaned? How
10 many do we have in the City? And who inspects them,
11 and how often are they inspected?

12 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: Sure, I can answer all
13 of those questions.

14 So, all of... There are over a 150,000 catch
15 basins across the City, and we inspect them on a
16 programmatic cycle based on the type of historical
17 information and inspection data that we get. So,
18 this is a program we are so proud of, because what we
19 do is we have looked at all catch basis, and each one
20 of them has individual inspection criteria and
21 schedule. So, we, for example, many catch basins are
22 on a sixth-month inspection cycle, which means that
23 every six months, we are going out there, we are
24 checking to see if they are operating as designed,
25 and making sure that they are not full of debris.

1
2 So, if you look in a catch basin, by the way, and you
3 see like a little bit of debris or water in it, that
4 is totally fine, they are still working. But we know
5 that catch basins that are in commercial districts
6 often get filled with litter more quickly, and so
7 that is why those are on a more frequent inspection
8 cycle. Then we use the data from our 20 years of
9 catch basin cleaning that we have digitized to
10 understand, okay, this catch basin on 87th Street in
11 Woodhaven, we have been there ever five... We go
12 there every three years, and it's never full. We can
13 put that on a three-year cycle, that's an appropriate
14 level. This one, on Jamaica Avenue, this one needs
15 to be checked x, y, and z because of these reasons.
16 And, so, every single catch basin in New York City is
17 on this programmatic cycle based on its historical
18 record. We refresh that every three years to make
19 sure that if there's changing conditions, uh, we can
20 also address that and make sure they're on the right
21 schedule.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Is there a plan to
23 upgrade, because they were saying that the amount of
24 rain that is coming in, that we have been receiving

25

1
2 due to climate change, is there a plan to upgrade the
3 amount of rain that they can capture?

4 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: Sure, so usually the
5 catch basin itself is not the limiting factor to
6 whether or not the rain... the watering is sitting on
7 the street. It is more often due to the capacity of
8 the sewer system beneath. And that is a complicated
9 equation based on a lot of different factors. And,
10 so, we are at the DEP, programmatically evaluating
11 the system and where we are seeing areas that are
12 more susceptible to storm water flooding, especially
13 inland flooding from these more intense storms. And
14 we are rolling out a range of solutions that can be
15 implemented both in the short and long term to help
16 address system capacities. So, you might have seen
17 rain gardens and other types of green infrastructure.
18 We have over 12,000 of these assets throughout the
19 city that are responsible for kind of absorbing water
20 before it hits the sewer, so that it is lessening
21 pressure. So, that we are creating these layers of
22 resilience throughout the city, so that we when we
23 get these intense storms - because the other thing to
24 remember about cloudbursts is that they are occur in
25 very localized areas...

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COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEHP: Right.

DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: And, so, you can't really build the sewer system to handle that amount of intense rainfall everywhere all the time. Because we would have to raise many, many blocks in order to find room to put all of the sewers. And, so, instead what we at the Department are evaluating and implementing is a distributed approach where we are looking for many, many opportunities to retain and detain storm water on public properties, at schools [TIMER CHIMES], parks as well as in the roadway.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And could you tell me what's the long term plan for Prospect Park and Kensington area that is constantly under water? I know there is a plan for Prospect Park, uh, they have a lake, the lake always overflows, sometimes they have to drain it. And Prospect Park Zoo in my district, by the way, is currently closed due to the flooding. So, we don't know when it is going to open for the families to enjoy. I just want to put that on the record.

So, please tell me the plan for Prospect Park, because we are under water every time it rains. And it doesn't have to be a big storm.

3 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: So, we are working closely
4 with the Parks Department to evaluate what the
5 options are there. It is a complicated system. And
6 we, too, with the Parks Department, share the concern
7 about that lake overtopping and flowing down,
8 especially on the southern end of the park. And, so,
9 it is something that we are actively discussing with
10 the Parks Department in trying to figure out an
11 engineering solution that will balance both the
12 parks' ecological needs, because you don't want to
13 get rid of the lake...

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Mm-hmm.

15 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: You know, that's one of
16 the solution, it's not a great one. But, also,
17 helps to protect flooding... Uh, protect the
18 neighborhood from flooding. And, so, it is a balance
19 that we are trying to engineer a solution that kind
20 of meets the variety of needs. I wouldn't say we are
21 there yet.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: All right. Thank you,
23 Chairs.

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you Council Member
25 Joseph.

2 We have also been joined by Council Member
3 Krishnan and Council Member Feliz via Zoom... And
4 Council Member Bottcher, thank you.

5 So, I just want to address evacuation. So, for
6 the Fire Department, what role does the Fire
7 Department serve as part of the City's response to
8 flooding caused by extreme weather? And what is your
9 responsibly regarding evacuation?

10 CHIEF ESPOSITO: Good morning, thank you for
11 the... [CROSS-TALK]

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Good morning.

13 CHIEF ESPOSITO: the question.

14 So, if it is an emergency evacuation where there
15 is life in danger, that is an emergency response that
16 the Fire Department would be involved with. And
17 whether it is a few people or a building, the Fire
18 Department is involved with more of a planned
19 evacuation, that is less of Fire Department
20 involvement. So, Woodhull Hospital that was evacuated
21 afterwards, we did have a minimal response there. We
22 had helped transport 30 patients out there to
23 different hospitals, but that takes away from our
24 emergency response in the field, and the planned
25 response is not part of that. But, uh, life

2 threatening situations, the Fire Department would be,
3 with our other agency partners, in charge and part of
4 that command element. [INAUDIBLE]... [CROSS-TALK]

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, any type of emergency or
6 an evacuation, uh, due to water, would then impact
7 your other services for FDNY and EMS?

8 CHIEF ESPOSITO: That is correct.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay.

10 So, we have now, uhm, staying on the topic of
11 evacuation, you know, we have lot of HERCS, we have a
12 lot of shelters, and we have a lot of other places
13 that may need to be evacuated in the event of a
14 climate, uhm, a climate emergency. So, adjacent to my
15 district, is a very large HERC, which will house up
16 to 2,000 people. So, what is the current evacuation
17 plan for Floyd Bennett Field?

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, as with
19 all ,you know, the structures Randall, Creedmoor,
20 other things that have gone up that our managed by
21 Health + Hospitals, Emergency Management has been
22 working with Garner, the contractor and others to
23 make sure, uhm, you know, that we have plans place
24 for the Floyd Bennett Field location since it is
25 federal land. I believe we have filed 23 or 24 plans

1 with the Parks Service before they gave us the okay
2 to house people there. And, so we are looking... We
3 look at the thresholds ,you know, the... For...
4 That's really the main concern. And it's not just
5 the amount of wind, it is also the direction ,you
6 know, and things like that. But, so, we are looking
7 at them, working with the contractor, and then we
8 also identify if it were a citywide evacuation, like
9 we have done during Hurricane Irene and Sandy ,you
10 know, schools would be available, and we would
11 identify a school that we would use for that. If it
12 is something as we are going out of coastal storm
13 season now, if it becomes less likely, but as we have
14 all talked about, there are other reasons why we
15 might have to evacuate, so we ,you know, have a list
16 of many buildings across the City with partners, with
17 city agencies, just like we have set up emergency
18 shelters after other large incidents. And, so, uhm,
19 we work with our agency partners. There obviously
20 would be bussing and ,you know, feeding, all of the
21 things that come along with moving a shelter like
22 that. So, we have in our, uhm, command structure for
23 the Asylum Seeker Operation at Emergency Management,
24 one of our key areas is cascading impacts. This is
25

2 something that we learned during COVID when we had
3 COVID going on, and then we had severe heat, we had
4 Hurricane [INAUDIBLE] all of that. So, we have been
5 looking at all... We have been talking with HPD. We
6 have been talking to H+H, and looking at our
7 facilities to make sure ,you know, whatever the
8 hazard is that we have a solid plan in place.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And that would also include
10 places that were taking refugees from the Rockaway
11 Peninsula, Mill Basin, and all of the other areas in
12 the surrounding communities that would be flooding as
13 well? Would there be additional places, or it's
14 still the same places that are identified? Because
15 that's 2,000 more people.

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Right. No, we
17 would, uh, because that is such a large structure, we
18 have identified... You know, there are 1,300 schools
19 in the City, and most of them are not in a coastal
20 storm evacuation zone. Because, really what you are
21 talking about is a coastal storm evacuation.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Mm-hmm

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Uh, so, we
24 would do a discreet evacuation of Floyd Bennett Field
25 to a specific location, uh, and then a general

2 population evacuation, they would be directed to
3 other centers.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, we all know that we used
5 the Marine Parkway Bridge and Flatbush Avenue as an
6 evacuation route for the Rockaway Peninsula. So, how
7 would that affect members of... residents of the
8 Rockaway Peninsula with the timeliness of their
9 evacuation?

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Uh, we would
11 have to work through that. Since we would be
12 evacuating ,you know, the residents of Floyd Bennett
13 Field as a separate evacuation, we could plan it on a
14 certain time so it wouldn't... You know to try to
15 lessen the impact. But ,you know, I mean, a large
16 coastal storm evacuation, whether we are that... We
17 would evacuate up to 3 million people. So, an extra
18 2,000 is a consideration, and it is something that we
19 are working through. But, it is going to be one
20 operation of many, many, many which would be
21 happening across the City.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: All right, thank you.

23 And was there a Department of Buildings approval
24 for the emergency evacuation plan, or was it not
25 necessary because it was federal property?

3 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: We are
4 working with the Fire Department, we are working with
5 DOB, with all of our partners here.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Mm-hmm.

7 Okay, so, I just want to turn towards the...
8 one of the hot topics was the fire hydrants and
9 they're not working. So, I just want to ask DEP, so,
10 there are 81 federal fire hydrants on the property -
11 42 are in service. Is that something that the DEP
12 regularly tests, or, because it is federal properties
13 it doesn't come under your jurisdiction?

14 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: So, the fire hydrants that
15 are on Floyd Bennett Field do not... Are not the
16 responsibility of DEP to operate and maintain. That
17 being said, we did offer the National Park Service,
18 uh, support as they are test... or NYCEM were
19 testing and making sure that the fire hydrants were
20 available. So, we supported, but they are not part
21 of our inventory.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, what was the... How...
23 What happened? Once you went on and you gave them
24 support, did you flush out fire hydrants? Are there
25 more than 42 now that work properly? Or are they
still unreliable?

2 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: I can't speak to the
3 reliability of them. I do know that we helped, uh,
4 repair a few.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay, all right, thank you.

6 So, Chief, uhm, were the fire hydrants identified
7 for use for FDNY operations procedures at Floyd
8 Bennett Field ever submerged in flood waters, for
9 example, during Hurricane Sandy?

10 CHIEF ESPOSITO: I am not... I don't know the
11 answer to that on the Park Service hydrants. We have
12 done an evaluation of the hydrants out there, and the
13 Park Service hydrants, we have found unreliable. And
14 we're not going to use - we are going to use the DEP
15 hydrants that are up on Flatbush Avenue. We have some
16 procedures in place to stretch hose lines from there.
17 But, the DEP hydrants are on a large enough main to
18 give us enough water once we get the, uh, supply line
19 stretched.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And just for the record, I
21 want to note that the DEP hydrant that the chief is
22 referring to is 3,500 feet away from the base camp.

23 Let's see, so regarding the FDNY's preplanning,
24 are the assigned units designated for water supply?

1
2 Who would the balance of the assignment potentially
3 be deployed to for evacuation?

4 CHIEF ESPOSITO: Okay, I'm...

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, may that's best...

6 CHIEF ESPOSITO: Well...

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: best answered by...

8 CHIEF ESPOSITO: You're asking about fire
9 companies?

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, the FDNY did a
11 preplanning... [CROSS-TALK]

12 CHIEF ESPOSITO: Correct...

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: analysis. So, according to
14 that analysis, what of the assigned units designated
15 for water supply, uh, would be used in the balance of
16 an assignment, potentially to be deployed for an
17 evacuation, if there were a fire?

18 CHIEF ESPOSITO: So, our fire companies, we have
19 increased the response. Our normal response to
20 report of a fire would be three engines and two
21 ladders. At Floyd Bennett Field we have increased
22 it. We would also have our satellite... one of our
23 satellite units and one of our hose wagons with the
24 large diameter hose. They have their plan. The
25 ladder companies would be in charge of ,you know,

1 conducting an evacuation, having the people leave the
2 structure that's on fire, just as we did... would for
3 other buildings. There are fire guards on scene, and
4 their instructions are to immediately start an
5 evacuation in the event that there is a fire.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And what is the level of
8 staffing and equipment sufficient to operate an
9 evacuation of 2,000 people? Fire department, or...

10 [CROSS-TALK]

11 CHIEF ESPOSITO: I'm not... [CROSS-TALK]

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: NYCEM [INAUDIBLE]...

13 CHIEF ESPOSITO: I'm not aware of that.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: NYCEM? Do we know how many
15 people we would need to evacuate an area of 2,000
16 people if there were a fire or climate event?

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, uh, it
18 would depend on ,you know, a fire evacuation, as the
19 chief has noted, is very different than a planned
20 evacuation for a coastal storm or something. As part
21 of our agreement with the state, the state is helping
22 us with the evacuation planning. And ,you know, any
23 evacuation is a large undertaking. And, so, we would
24 take resources from different agencies, work with the
25 state, to move the people as efficiently as possible.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: But, it certainly would need
3 a lot of staff

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Yes, depending
5 on the type of ,you know, if it's just in time or if
6 it's something that's planned out, but ,you know, we
7 have many different types of evacuation plans, and we
8 have done different types of evacuations over the
9 years. So, right now there is a small number of
10 people at Floyd Bennett Field, but if it continues to
11 grow, we will ,you know, keep involvement in it.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Right, and, so, there's the
13 capacity for 2,000 people, and with budget cuts
14 coming, and hiring freezes, and no overtime, that
15 could be a problem. That's just a statement. You
16 don't need to answer.

17 And the people who are going to Floyd Bennett
18 Field, now I have been there when there has been up
19 to a foot of flooding, uh, and, then, more during
20 Hurricane Sandy. And, then, we had to wait for the
21 water to recede in order to use it as a staging area
22 for supplies for people who lived in the adjacent
23 communities. So, have the migrants been provided
24 with any type of flotation devices, like, something
25 that could assist them ,you know, in remaining

1
2 upright while exiting Floyd Bennett Field if it
3 floods - the way that it can flood?

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: If we felt...
5 And, again, we were doing this more as an exercise
6 these weekend. But, with the weather and the winds
7 coming in tomorrow night, we have been talking, uh,
8 to the agencies and to our contractor about what an
9 evacuation would look like. You know, these are
10 large structures, and, uh, we also have the
11 experience of having Randall and Creedmoor up for
12 some time now. So, the contractor, we don't... They
13 wouldn't give individual items to individual people.
14 But, they do have many supplies on site, and they can
15 add more things. I would also say that these types of
16 evacuations would most likely happen ,you know,
17 before the fact or ,you know, not at the time you are
18 suggesting. So, I don't know if they would be
19 necessary. But, we do, like I said, we created many,
20 many plans. We have talked to many, many partners,
21 and, so, uhm, we feel like we are prepared.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. And, Chief, the fire
23 hydrants that are there, let's see, it was 81 and 42
24 that are operational. Do you have a map that shows
25 where they are, in the event that they are covered by

1 water ,you know, by flooding? And it doesn't have to
2 really be a climate event, because we get tidal
3 flooding [BACKGROUND NOISE] all the time. So, do you
4 know where they are, so that they could be accessed
5 for use?
6

7 CHIEF ESPOSITO: The DEP hydrants that we would
8 use are the ones that are up on Flatbush Avenue.
9 And, uh, we do have them on the preplanned map. The
10 National Park Service hydrants that are scattered
11 throughout, they are on a smaller main, and we won't
12 be using them. We will use the DEP hydrants on
13 [BACKGROUND NOISE] Flatbush Avenue.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: All right. And, then,
15 conversely, let's take Randalls Island, what is that
16 location when it comes to any type of fire or water
17 evacuation? How many hydrants are there? How many
18 hydrants are at Creedmoor? And if there was a large
19 fire or climate emergency throughout the City, how
20 could you staff each and every one of those locations
21 to evacuate people? I just... I think it is, uh
22 ,you know, with the current staffing the way it is?

23 CHIEF ESPOSITO: So, generally throughout the
24 City, the fire hydrants are spaces about 300 feet
25 apart. And that is similar up on Randalls Island.

2 So, the fire... There are more fire hydrants and
3 much closer together. And down in Floyd Bennett
4 Field, once you get off Flatbush Avenue, back into
5 National Park Service, they just don't have the
6 number of the spacing of hydrants. And it
7 [BACKGROUND NOISE] You know, we have plans to
8 compensate for that. Concerning an evacuation, if
9 the fire department is asked - if it's an
10 nonemergency evacuation, the fire department ,you
11 know, is asked to contribute resources, we will
12 evaluate our ability to give resources at that time.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: All right, because we all
14 remember, during Hurricane Sandy, in Breezy Point,
15 when people were being evacuated, there was also a
16 major [BACKGROUND NOISE] fire going on at the same
17 time. And it was a very challenging evacuation. So
18 ,you know, if that were to happen ,you know, say at
19 Floyd Bennett Field, if it were a large fire, the
20 fire was spreading, we have to evacuate people from
21 Breezy Point, and we could never use Flatbush Avenue,
22 and vice-versa for the people who live in Brooklyn.
23 So, thank you for your answers.

24 Any other questions?
25

2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Council Member Krishnan
3 has...

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yes?

5 (PAUSE)

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, we have Council Member
7 Riley, and then we have Council Member Krishnan.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you, Chair.

9 Good morning, everyone. Just two quick
10 questions, so, New York City's current infrastructure
11 consists of an extensive network of over 7,400 miles
12 of sewer pipes that collect sanitary, sewage, and
13 stormwater in 14 WRRFs (Waste Water Resource Recovery
14 Facilities), that receive the flow. We need to
15 construct some new high level storm sewers, like,
16 Council Member Holden stated, to keep storm water out
17 of the sewer system and reduce flooding.

18 So, my question is, understanding future
19 investments can alleviate flooding through the City,
20 how is the Department working to leverage stormwater
21 investments to help manage future flood risk from
22 extreme rain and sea level rise?

23 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: Thank you for that
24 question. I am happy to talk about capital planning
25 all day.

2 So, we are working right now on a program... as
3 announced in Plan NYC, a storm water adaptation plan.
4 And basically the goal of this plan is to help us
5 make sure that our funding that is available for
6 storm water improvements, which is over \$2 billion in
7 our capital plan, is able to be allocated to the
8 communities that experience the most chronic and deep
9 flooding - especially as we are experiencing more
10 intense rainfall. And, so, we are currently working
11 through an evaluative process to identify these
12 priority locations where we can identify where
13 [INAUDIBLE] measures need to be taken. And, as I
14 mentioned earlier, we are thinking about planning for
15 storm water in a holistic, multi-layered way. So,
16 it's not just more sewers. Although sewers are a
17 great tool in the toolbox, they're not always the
18 fastest thing you can install, especially if they are
19 far away from the coastline. And, so, sewers are
20 constructed kind of like a tree at the outfall, by
21 the coats it's the largest, and as you get further
22 and further inland, the sewers get smaller and
23 smaller. And, so, if you need to make a substantial
24 upgrade, uh, far inland, it takes a lot of miles of
25 sewers to upgrade. And, so, that is why we look to

2 other tools in our toolbox to manage stormwater. I
3 had talked about green infrastructure earlier, that
4 is one of our... a great tool that we have to help
5 deal with localized conditions. We have also
6 announced four cloudburst neighborhoods, which are
7 areas where we can identify ways to pull storm water
8 out of the right of way and take it away from homes
9 and businesses. And, then we store it either
10 underground in underwater contention tanks or in
11 large green infrastructure installations. We are
12 also working on a number of green medians throughout
13 the city. So, at Hollis, we just started work on one
14 by Van Buren High School, which allows us to take
15 this very unsightly - sorry, Department of
16 Transportation - unsightly concrete median, and grain
17 it so that we can build both, uh, some blue
18 infrastructure, which is just a way saying that it
19 has some constructed aspects, like an underground
20 tank, and well as green infrastructure, so plants and
21 trees, to help absorb storm water and keep it where
22 it is as opposed to having to rely on the sewer
23 system. Because that is an area that is very far
24 away from the coast.

3 And, so, all of these different layers are things
4 that we can implement to help increase the stormwater
5 resiliency of the City. It's not a one size fits
6 all. Uh, Council Member Carr was just here, but in
7 his district we are doing a ton of blue belts, which
8 are ways that we can use natural streams to help
9 manage and detain stormwater as well.

10 So, I would say that it is a constantly, ongoing
11 learning process, especially as we deal with these
12 more intense cloudbursts, which is causing us to have
13 to think a little bit more creatively about how to
14 manage stormwater, so that we can make sure that New
15 Yorkers are able to go about their lives and are not
16 put into danger. But, also understanding that long
17 term capital sewer investments are challenging and
18 long. You know, no one builds a sewer in a day,
19 and, so, we have to think about all of these
20 different tools we can have, while also making sure
21 that we are investing our resources where the most
22 chronic and deep and contiguous flooding. And so...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you.

24 I am not sure if the North East Bronx is in any
25 of those plans, but, if not, I would love to meet
with you and discuss some of the challenges that we

2 are seeing over there, especially for a lot of our
3 homeowners, uh, during a lot of these storms.

4 I just have one more question. Along with air
5 quality initiatives for other city agencies, DEP is
6 responsible for updating and enforcing The Air
7 Pollution Control Code, which has the goal to
8 preserve, protect and improve the air resources for
9 New York City. So, my question is, understanding
10 when agencies work together, their resources and
11 collective action can lead to more impactful results,
12 are there any air quality initiatives that were
13 collaborations with other city agencies implanted
14 this year? If not, are there any initiatives set to
15 be Implemented next year?

16 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: I can't speak
17 specifically to this year, but I can talk a little
18 bit about the partnership that we have that is very,
19 uh, great with the Department of Health and Mental
20 Hygiene. So, with DOHMH, we work together to
21 implement a number of air quality initiatives to
22 improve [TIMER CHIMES] uh, air quality throughout New
23 York City. And we can certainly follow up with more
24 specifics.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. That will be
3 all of my questions. Thank you, Chair.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. We
5 have been joined by Council Member Velázquez. And we
6 have questions from Council Member Krishnan and then
7 will move to Council Member Restler.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Good morning, and thank
9 you so much, Chairs, I appreciate today's hearing
10 about this very important issue, and how we are
11 better and prepare ourselves for the ongoing, and no
12 doubt, recurring storms and situations we will have,
13 like the prior one that we had.

14 My questions are really for DEP. And it was
15 interesting to hear the steps you are all taking now
16 to address all of the various issues. I mean it is
17 just such an unfortunate and serious issue that one
18 of the biggest reasons for flooding is because we
19 have such an outdated public infrastructure that
20 results in all of the flooding in our streets and
21 really addressing that issue.

22 My questions, though, are more specific about on
23 the ground, one thing I saw on the day of the storm
24 itself, and I followed up with The Commissioner about
25 this too, and my... this was after my staff had also

1 followed up with DEP. There are now three instances
2 in my district of localized flooding issues that we
3 have raised with DEP, but have not gotten
4 satisfactory resolutions yet.
5

6 And my concern is when we are talking up here
7 about all of the policy issues and how we address it,
8 if we are unable to create a system within DEP that
9 addresses the on the ground situations as they
10 develop, then we are not going to be able to actually
11 implement the stuff on the ground where it matters
12 most - in neighborhoods like mine that have been very
13 affected by numerous instances of flooding - from Ida
14 to back in September. And I bring that up to... one
15 instance was, uh, right now, there is a series of
16 home owners on 31st Avenue on 77th Street, again we
17 have flagged all of these addresses for DEP, where
18 they experienced a serious amount of flooding with
19 the last storm. Of course, much more during Ida, but
20 in this instance as well. DEP's initial response was
21 there were no 3-1-1 complaints filed. But, I went
22 there, and I saw for myself, the level of damage.
23 And I know from ,you know, in other contexts, like in
24 housing, oftentimes HPD will say, look, there's no
25 record from 3-1-1. But that doesn't mean a violation

3 of the housing code doesn't exist. And, in fact, the
4 photos are the best evidence of that.

5 So, similarly in this situation, I am not sure
6 what happened, whether it was a language access issue
7 or otherwise, but despite there not being 3-1-1
8 complaints, we have not been able to get DEP to come
9 out to investigate something that I have seen myself.
10 And to the commissioner's credit, I have been working
11 on it with him now on a site visit for that location.
12 But the second place is on Baxter Avenue and Broadway
13 in Elmhurst, there is water pooling that we have
14 notified DEP about over a month ago at this point.
15 And there has been no action taken. And, now,
16 constituents are reaching out to us about it. And
17 the colder weather still hasn't come yet, but if you
18 go there now, there is a huge pool of water in the
19 middle of a very busy intersection.

20 The third thing is, on 77th Street and 37th
21 Avenue in Jackson Heights, there is some sort of
22 metal grate or something that is under DEP's
23 jurisdiction that has been broken, creating a major
24 tripping hazard for [BACKGROUND NOISE] constituents,
25 especially seniors, who have fallen a number of times
crossing the street, as a busy intersection.

2 Again, we flagged this with DEP... [CROSS-TALK]

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: absolutely, it's more than
4 [INAUDIBLE]... [CROSS-TALK]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: with no action
6 whatsoever.... [CROSS-TALK]

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [INAUDIBLE] basement...

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: And, this morning, I
9 have actually mentioned to the commissioner that I
10 would be raising these instances again with him and
11 with you all... [CROSS-TALK]

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [INAUDIBLE]...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: But, I bring it up to
14 say, one, I would really appreciate if these
15 instances are taken a look at, uh, as soon as
16 possible. I mean, these are also liability issues
17 for DEP too that could be addressed immediately and
18 we flagged it.

19 But, two, it presents a larger point of, while
20 all that is happening up here is great, when these
21 happen on the ground in real time, how do we create a
22 system within DEP that doesn't require me going to
23 the commissioner, but within the agency there is
24 actually a fast, meaningful way to respond. Because,
25

2 honestly, in situations of climate emergencies, a lot
3 of this stuff will need to be happening in real time.

4 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: So, first, I want to
5 apologize for the delay in getting back to you. I
6 have seen the email traffic on all of these, so I
7 know they are being actively investigated. But, we
8 can certainly get you an update as to where we are.

9 And, I would say, the other thing that we are
10 doing, in terms of our public communication tools, is
11 we are seeking to hire borough commissioners so that
12 we have a more... a point person for every council
13 member or borough president, so that they can create
14 the deeper relationship with a person at DEP. And
15 they can ensure that you're getting timely responses
16 to the issues that are raised.

17 So, we are really hopeful that that is going to
18 be one of the tools that helps us to make sure that
19 this types of complaints and concerns don't kind of
20 get lost in the ether. Because that is not really
21 doing service to your constituents, to us, to anyone
22 really - especially for ones where we are actively
23 investigating them. So, and just a note on the 3-1-1
24 complaints, I also am understanding of the
25 limitations of 3-1-1, but it is always helpful for us

2 to have these complaints logged, because it does help
3 us to create a historical record. Because, when we
4 are thinking about chronic locations throughout the
5 city, and understanding where we have systemic
6 issues, versus where we have one very loud
7 constituent, which never happens. And, it is really
8 great for us to have this [TIMER CHIMES] historical
9 record. And, so, while it is... I have often been
10 on the phone with 3-1-1 - many times, uh, calling in
11 random complaints in my neighborhood as well - it is
12 really important to us at DEP to have these types of
13 issues forwarded through 3-1-1, so we do create that
14 record. But, for these three issues, we will make
15 sure that we get back to you with wherever we are in
16 the process...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Okay.

18 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: So, that you have some
19 updates.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Yes, thank you, I
21 appreciate that.

22 And I would just add, one ,you know, I think...
23 and understanding all of this, too, I would strongly
24 recommend that you all look at a way to really create
25 a much more on the ground rapid response, that's done

2 as quickly as possible. Because, again, these three
3 instances all happened in the last two months really,
4 and there has been no response. And ,you know, a lot
5 more serious instances like this will occur after
6 storms. And, so, the agency has to be able to have
7 some sort of rapid [TIMER CHIMES] response
8 communication.

9 So, the first instance, on 31st Avenue, that
10 requires a site visit. I have spoken to the
11 commissioner directly about it. We will get there.
12 That may require more involved work. But, the second
13 two ,you know, after a month that we have raised it,
14 and now constituents are coming forward raising what
15 we spotted a while ago, I can go out on the street
16 today, and it is very clear to me, in both of those
17 instances that I have seen firsthand, it just needs
18 to be fixed. And, so, my hope... and I raise it,
19 one, at the level of, in these three instances,
20 especially the latter two, they just need to be
21 fixed. It is not a complicated process. The problem
22 is very obvious. And, so, the agency needs to really
23 have a way to... and, they're not very involved
24 issues, but it just... it's getting lost in the

3 bureaucracy. And I think it just requires immediate
4 attention and immediate repairs to them.

5 Uh, and the second thing is, kind of broadening
6 out in a more macro level, coming up with a system
7 that really will allow for these small, but serious
8 and important liability inducing repairs to be fixed
9 right away, so that you all can focus on the larger
10 problems that do require more involved analysis and
11 work, thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Council Member Restler?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Chair Brewer, thank you
14 so much, welcome back home, we missed you. Nothing?
15 Nothing...

16 [LAUGHTER]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: uhm...

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You never know what he's
19 going to say...

20 [LAUGHTER]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: It's always good to have
22 Gale around...

23 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Always good to have you...

24 [LAUGHTER]

25 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [LAUGHING] Uh...

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: It's a long story...

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [LAUGHING] Can I just
3 first start, uh, Deputy Commissioner, does the
4 Administration support Introductions 1200, 1201, and
5 1199?

6 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, we have
7 been looking at them, specifically, obviously our
8 agency has been looking at the two that would be in
9 our code. And I know DEP is doing the same. You
10 know, I think that there are some concerns and some
11 things to work through. I would say on ,you know, we
12 have been, since June, looking at building a plan.
13 And we have put certain pieces in place. For
14 example, when we had any severe heat and activated
15 the heat plan, because not always, but often, air
16 quality and severe heat come together. So, we have
17 added this state DEC to those calls, because they are
18 the experts in the state on this. And we have also,
19 as I mentioned before, ,you know, added DOE to all of
20 the calls. We have added DCAS, because we understand
21 that ,you know, worker health and safety aspects.
22 Also, for, uh, messaging, people probably know, I am
23 sure you know, that we do send out the air quality
24 alerts from DEC. But, also, where there have been...
25 `thankfully there has been nothing as strong as the

2 June 7th air quality issues, but there have been some
3 blips along the way. And, so, we have done enhanced
4 messaging as per new protocol, both through Notify
5 NYC, through messaging through our press office and
6 City Hall. So, we will continue to strengthen that,
7 and, uh, you know, work with you on those bills.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So, on 1200 and 1201, the
9 Administration's position is in opposition or in
10 support?

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I don't know
12 that we have a formal position at this point. Like, I
13 said, we understand the import. We appreciate the
14 partnership, and we will continue to work to make it
15 as effective as possible.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And 1199?

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: That's the...

18 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: Similarly, we are
19 evaluating, and we don't have a formal position at
20 this time... [CROSS-TALK]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay. I will just say
22 that this a, uh, it... I realize this one was
23 calendared a little later in the process, but we
24 introduced these bills many months ago, and have been
25 in touch with the agencies. At a minimum, we expect

3 you all to come forward and express a position on the
4 bills and to give feedback on them. And it is a
5 little disappointing that we couldn't get a more
6 direct response today.

7 Deputy Commissioner Farrell, are the current
8 protocols that you have all been developing relating
9 to air quality emergencies, is that something that is
10 publicly available for review or still in
11 development?

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: They are still
13 in development. We will... we are always happy, as
14 you know ,you know, to talk through our process. As
15 you also noted, we have been looking at other
16 jurisdictions, notably ,you know, cities in
17 California, or other areas that have experience with
18 this, to understand what is the most effective way.
19 So, we will continue to talk with you and share
20 things... [CROSS-TALK]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay.

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: as they become
23 available.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I appreciate that you are
25 always responsive and accessible individually, and I
want to thank you for that. But, I do... it is

3 critically important, that is why we have introduced
4 this legislation, that there be a clear emergency
5 plan that New Yorkers are able to review and assess -
6 - and know what to do when the next air quality
7 emergency occurs.

8 Uh, if the air quality index went up to 200
9 tomorrow, which hopefully it won't, uh, what would be
10 the policy for a homeless... a street homeless New
11 Yorker? Would they be able to walk in and access any
12 shelter in New York City in a severe air quality
13 emergency?

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I would have
15 to defer this specifics of the policy to the
16 Department of Social Services. But, I will also say,
17 as we were increasing our discussions with DEC and
18 others about air quality when we had little blips
19 over the summer, we were talking to DSS about ,you
20 know, what that would look like and how their polices
21 may adjust.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: It was... You know, one
23 of the City's re... one of the components of the
24 City's response to the air quality emergency in June,
25 it was most troubling to me, and I think to many
others, was there wasn't clear guidance provided to

2 street homeless New Yorkers. When we have a code
3 blue, just it like it was two weekends ago, and it
4 was under 32 degrees, homeless New Yorkers could walk
5 into any shelter in New York City and be safe. We
6 need clarity on that policy. And that is part of the
7 reason that we have introduced this package. Because
8 people are in... our most vulnerable New Yorkers are
9 in harm's way.

10 You know, I think it is about 10 percent of the
11 population that [TIMER CHIMES] access Notify NYC.
12 How does the City expect the remaining 90 percent of
13 population to find out about dangerous events when we
14 are not being proactive in our communication - when
15 the mayor is not organizing press conferences, when
16 they mayor is not giving clear direction? Do you
17 know the percentage of seniors, or older adults, I
18 think I'm supposed to say, who are signed up for
19 Notify NYC? Like how do... I mean, higher need
20 populations, are they accessing the information that
21 we are putting out through these text alerts?

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, thank you.
23 So, uh, we have, uh, about 1.2 million New Yorkers
24 signed up, but I would say that that is far greater
25 than 10 percent, because, obviously ,you know, young

2 children are not subscribing. I think it may be more
3 now. But, what we had seen before was about 3.5
4 million cellphones or ,you know, people that would
5 sign up for Notify NYC. So, it is a large number.
6 But, uh, as I said before, we want that number to be
7 everyone in the City. And we start as early as ,you
8 know, high school or junior high school, if
9 appropriate ,you know, telling people to download the
10 app or to sign up. And it also available in 14
11 languages. One thing as we look at seniors, we don't
12 ask people... we do some, uh, voluntary surveys
13 where people can give the demographic information
14 you're asking about. And I can look to see what was
15 in the last survey...

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yeah...

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: By and large,
18 we don't ask people to ,you know, for their age or
19 other demographics to sign up. We want to make it as
20 welcoming as possible... [CROSS-TALK]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I... yeah, I... look,
22 I... 1.2 million is progress, and Rome wasn't built
23 in day. And, so, I appreciate that the numbers are
24 moving in the right direction. But, even if you add
25 a million kids, we are still talking about over 6

3 million New Yorkers that are not receiving Notify
4 NYC. So, six out of seven folks that you might hope
5 were receiving it are not. And, so ,you know, the
6 mayor held no press conference between the... before
7 the air quality emergency in June, held no press
8 conference before the terrible flooding events that
9 overwhelmed our community in North Brooklyn in
10 September. If he is not using his bully pulpit,
11 there is only so much that Commissioner Iscol can do
12 by doing a straight tv interview here of there. It
13 is just inadequate. And, so, ,you know, it is a
14 major concern for us that we are not getting
15 information out in the ways that... that it needs to
16 be.

17 I would like to ask about Clean Air Centers. Is
18 this something that NYCEM is considering, creating in
19 your new protocols? The last time Commissioner Iscol
20 testified here, he argued to us that it was unsafe
21 for somebody who didn't have shelter or had poor air
22 quality in their home, in an air quality emergency,
23 to walk a few minutes to a Clean Air Center. And I
24 just wanted to understand, does that continue to be
25 NYCEM's approach, that Clean Air Centers are
potentially a greater health risk? Which is not what

2 we have heard from any public health professional we
3 have spoken to on the matter.

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Sure, I just
5 wanted to finish... [CROSS-TALK]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Sorry...

7 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: my answer...
8 that's okay... to the earlier question, uhm, ,you
9 know, one thing about Notify NYC is that we do phone
10 calls. You can sign up for direct phone calls. I
11 still get them... [CROSS-TALK]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yes, I do, too...

13 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Uh, yeah, so
14 that is also... and you can call 3-1-1 to sign up.
15 So ,you know, we want to encourage people that aren't
16 on Twitter, aren't on their smartphones all day long,
17 to get those messages. I also wanted to mention that
18 we do have the advance warning system. That is
19 something that goes out to providers and to people
20 with disabilities and access functional needs. Which
21 those populations may overlap with some of the
22 vulnerable New Yorkers that you are referencing. So,
23 we... Notify NYC is the main emergency alert tool,
24 but there are certainly others, uh... [CROSS-TALK]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Right, but there was no
3 communication to schools, there was no communication
4 to even the council members before the air quality
5 emergency, uh, in any meaningful way. I appreciate
6 that you all are trying to do what you can. It just
7 doesn't feel like we have a cooperative city hall
8 that is taking its responsibility seriously to engage
9 and inform New Yorkers about the risks that we are
10 facing. And it is not something, as you said,
11 Emergency Management has 250 staff, and as committed
12 and, uh, as they are, uhm, we need the full force of
13 city government behind keeping us safe when
14 emergencies arise. And it does not feel like we have
15 had the attention of City Hall, uh, in... in
16 certainly the last two major weather related
17 emergencies that have hit New York City.

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: You know, as
19 you know, we work with all of our partners. We work
20 closely with City Hall, and we are all committed to
21 getting the information out. And ,you know, I think
22 that message has been heard loud and clear.

23 Speaking about Clean Air Centers, that is
24 something that we are looking into. You know, it is
25 not... it is not clear, a 100 percent, you know,

2 what that would look like. I will say that the
3 closest thing we may have in the City is cooling
4 centers. And cooling centers, as probably the
5 Council knows, are senior centers, libraries, they
6 are in existing buildings. You know, I don't know if
7 they would qualify as a Clean Air Center. So, that I
8 think is a multi-pronged question that we would have
9 to look at.... [CROSS-TALK]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yeah...

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: to the
12 efficacy, how realistic it is, and how that would
13 work.

14 But, we are committed to the messaging. We also
15 have done things, as I think people know, every
16 firehouse, every police station, every library branch
17 in the City, has masks available. And there has not
18 been great uptake. I will say that New Yorkers have
19 not taken advantage of the resource in any meaningful
20 way. But, just like we have ,you know, we told
21 people during COVID, have your... for 20 years I
22 have been telling people how to put together a go
23 bag. You know, we added masks for COVID a few years
24 ago. We have now added masks for potential air
25 quality events. So, we are looking at the places all

1 different ways that we can make New Yorkers safer...

2 [CROSS-TALK]

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I... You know, we have
5 seven precincts and two PSAs in our district, we
6 called them, none of them had a clue about masks
7 during the air quality emergency. They didn't know
8 that they had them or that that were responsible for
9 distributing them. Ther were two FDNY locations set
10 up in the borough of Brooklyn with 3 million people
11 in it. Fortunately one was in our district, and I
12 went out and thanked the FDNY staff [INAUDIBLE] who
13 were there. But the idea that that... [CROSS-TALK]

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Council Member if you could
15 just wrap up, because Council Member Hanif has
16 questions.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Apologies. If there is
18 time for a second round, I will come back. I... I
19 just think that the lack of engagement and awareness
20 on how we could stay safe in this moment was horribly
21 scary. And people didn't know what to do or how to
22 stay safe. And the information was not coming out
23 from this administration in a clear way. And that is
24 why we need to move forward.

25 But if time allows, I will come back.

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I just wanted
3 to say one thing before we go to Council Member
4 Hanif, she is here, the night of the air quality
5 emergency, Council Member Schulman, who I have known
6 for a longtime, called and asked if we would deliver
7 masks, and, so we did divert 5,000 masks that I know
8 she gave out across Forest Hills. So ,you know, I
9 hear on what you are saying, but we also are a
10 very... Especially before the storms, we also gave
11 out personalized flood barriers for home owners. So,
12 ,you know, will take all partners. We will take all
13 comers. And, so, if council members also want masks
14 or other things, just like Council Member Schulman
15 did, we are happy to work with you to get those out.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Look, I appreciate it. I
17 know whenever we call you for help, you are
18 accessible and responsive, and I appreciate it. We
19 called every library and senior center in our
20 district to see if it were a safe place that we could
21 direct people to as a Clear Air Center in our
22 community during the air quality emergency, we used
23 the masks in our office to get them out to key
24 locations across our district to make sure that
25 people could access them. It just felt like we were

2 operating on our own. And we know that these air
3 quality emergencies are unfortunately a new reality
4 that we have recon with, and that is why we want to
5 make sure that there is a comprehensive protocol in
6 place to keep New Yorkers safe. So, thank you,
7 Chairs.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

9 Council Member Hanif asked me to ask a couple of
10 questions.

11 Number one, on the FEMA, I think what you said
12 was that this particular flashflood did not rise to
13 the extent of being able to apply for FEMA money. Is
14 that correct?

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: It is. Ther
16 are certain thresholds. What it did on our side, uh,
17 what it did qualify for was potential Small Business
18 Administration low interest loans. And, so we are
19 going though that process with the state and the
20 federal government to see if they agree, and then
21 those would be resources that are available.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Most small businesses want
23 grants, they don't want loans...

24 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Everyone wants
25 grants, I know... [CROSS-TALK]

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah, they don't want loans.

4 That's very nice that... [CROSS-TALK]

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: We work with
6 the tools that we have.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. I am just saying,
8 they're not going to take them, I will promise you
9 that.

10 Number two is, on the basement, I know you talked
11 about the fact that you are working hard to do extra
12 notifications, do you know how many people in
13 basement apartments have signed up or are
14 participating in your notification system? Maybe
15 that's... I don't know if you can do some kind of a
16 GIS on that?

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: No, we know.
18 I checked yesterday. Right now, we launched this in
19 September for the second anniversary of Hurricane
20 Ida. Right now we have 2,122 subscribers...

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Obviously
23 there are basement apartments, we want many more
24 subscribers. But, like I said, we flag it every
25 week, and we look at different ways that we can get
it out. Uhm, when we did the Day of Action back in

2 August with our CERT members and with the council
3 members, one thing that they did in the neighborhoods
4 in Queens, and the other boroughs, was look
5 specifically where it looked like there may be
6 basement apartments and to talk to the people living
7 there or leave information, so that they knew that
8 this resource was available.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

10 There is, I guess, some state legislation by
11 Kavanaugh and Epstein, is that something that you
12 support? I assume that has to do with basement
13 apartments. Do you know anything about that?

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Uhm, I know
15 that State Legislative Affairs has been working on
16 different things... [CROSS-TALK]

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: But, I'm not
19 familiar with that specific legislation... [CROSS-
20 TALK]

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, and the 9th Street high
22 level storm sewer upgrade, I don't know the status of
23 that. Is that something that you are monitoring in
24 terms of DEP?

2 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: We can get to you with
3 the schedule updates for that project... [CROSS-
4 TALK]

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, that's what she
6 wants... That's what she wants to know.

7 My other question, quickly, is Ida took place,
8 that was not an actual rapid storm situation like we
9 had on September 29th, but is there something that we
10 could have learned from Ida that would have impact on
11 September 29th?

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, I would
13 say, and I know I touched upon it in my testimony, we
14 did learn a lot from Ida. That was one of the first
15 times where we saw such concentrated inland flooding.
16 And, so, we have ,you know, I know that she testified
17 about Rainfall Ready and the things going on like
18 that. We have... We worked extensively with Chair
19 Ariola's office and other council members to give out
20 the flood barriers and other items to help homeowners
21 protect themselves. We have increased the basement
22 messaging. And one thing that ,you know, a positive
23 that came out of Ida, is we have received a
24 significant amount of recovery money through the
25 federal CDBG grant money. As so we are using that to

3 increase Notify outreach to get more people signed
4 up. Uh, looking at the forecasting consultant that I
5 mentioned earlier, that comes out of that money.
6 Looking at specific outreach and other improvements,
7 we can make, so there will be more to come. But, we
8 learn from every storm. I mean, I think also just the
9 scale, as people know, we didn't receive one request
10 for sheltering or ,you know, or, uh, after the
11 September 29th storm. Even after last year, the storm
12 that happened most in the Rockaways right before
13 Christmas last year, we actually sheltered people
14 after that storm. Nobody asked for sheltering on
15 September 29th. Thankfully, there were no serious
16 injuries or fatalities, unlike Ida. So, they were
17 very different events. But, we do take all of the
18 information, everything that we learn, and
19 incorporate it to do better in the future....

20 [CROSS-TALK]

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, one last question. Is
22 NYCHA in DEP? So, my district, and I think
23 elsewhere, a day care center gets flooded, because
24 NYCHA doesn't do the work to get the materials that
25 are necessary to clean the catch basins. I assume
that's their job. In other words, if it is on NYCHA

2 property, those catch basins are to be cleaned by
3 NYCHA or by you. The bad news is that NYCHA doesn't
4 do it. So, the day cares, two feet of water. So, I
5 am just... How do you work with NYCHA and catch
6 basins? that's my question.

7 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: Sure, so, there some city
8 streets that run through NYCHA complexes. Those do
9 have catch basins where DEP is responsible. For the
10 ones that are interior drainage for the campuses
11 themselves, those are the responsibility of NYCHA.
12 However, where we can assist them, and they ask for
13 our help, we are happy to do so. It just is that
14 often they are nonstandard, which means that our
15 equipment is just not the right size and cannot
16 really access the catch basis.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So, the 150,000 catch basin
18 number does not include catch basins on NYCHA
19 property, is that correct?

20 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: Correct, it is only on
21 City streets.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, and, so, but do you
23 have any conversations? Like, does NYCHA know how to
24 clean catch basins? Do you have any conversations? I
25 am like trying to find ways that agencies aren't so

3 siloed, so that you do talk to each other. Is there
4 ongoing conversations from, perhaps, talking with
5 them about what did happen - during this storm or
6 others - regarding catch basins?

7 DEPUTY CHIEF CIPRIANO: So, we have a number of
8 operational relationships with NYCHA regarding things
9 like water leaks or other types of infrastructure
10 issues. On catch basins in particular, I am not
11 entirely sure if we have an ongoing relationship
12 about how to clean them. But, if they did ask for
13 support, we would be happy.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: All right, thank you very
15 much.

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I will also
17 just mention that with NYCHA, they are part of our
18 calls, our consults, and our EOC activations. The
19 director of Emergency Management at NYCHA was
20 formally the director of our watch command. And, so,
21 he understands this business very intimately and
22 well. And, so, ,you know, we talk to them if there
23 are other, like, she said, if there is different
24 equipment or things that they need. But if there are
25 specific developments that you know have issues, and

2 you want to talk to us and NYCHA about, we are happy
3 to facilitate that conversation... [CROSS-TALK]

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I think as a result of this
5 conversation, I am going to ask them what the status
6 is of all of their catch basins, and do they have the
7 kind of protocol that DEP does. How much do I bet
8 that they do not? And, then, it, because, I ,you
9 know... So, that's what they need. And they need to
10 do that. Thank you very much.

11 Thank you very much, we will go to public
12 testimony. You are a really informed group of public
13 officials, and we appreciate you very much, thank
14 you.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you very much.

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Thank you,
17 have a good Thanksgiving.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yes, Happy Thanksgiving.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much for your
20 testimony.

21 Before we turn to public testimony, we will first
22 hear from Brit Byrd from the Brookly Borough
23 President's office. Please wait for the sergeant to
24 announce that you may begin before delivering your
25

2 testimony. Thank you, you may begin when you are
3 ready.

4 BRIT BYRD: Good morning, Chairs Brewer and
5 Ariola, and thank you for the opportunity to testify
6 today. My name is Brit Byrd, and I am a Senior
7 Planner in the office of Brooklyn Borough President
8 Antonio Reynoso.

9 On September 29, a life-threatening rainstorm
10 dropped up to 7+ inches of rain on Brooklyn. To put
11 this in perspective, according to the Weather
12 Channel, the city on average gets about 4.3 inches
13 for the entire month of September. The storm left
14 commuters stranded as subways shut down, flooded
15 schools, trapped people in basement apartments,
16 caused damage to homes and vehicles, and generally
17 created dangerous conditions across the city.

18 Extreme weather events like this are becoming
19 more common due to climate change. As outlined in the
20 Borough President's recently released Comprehensive
21 Plan for Brooklyn, we are facing increased threats
22 from both coastal inundation and stormwater flooding.
23 As you can see in the attached maps, this impacts
24 every neighborhood in the borough.

2 The chaos on September 29 was a cautionary tale
3 that underscores the importance of preparation for
4 these weather events and clear communication with the
5 public about them. We have the tools to achieve this,
6 including a 2021 report from the de Blasio
7 administration's Extreme Weather Response Task Force
8 that called for strengthening inter-agency
9 coordination; improving communication with vulnerable
10 communities, property owners, and the public; and
11 utilizing data to inform decision-making; in addition
12 to preventative measures such as infrastructure
13 upgrades.

14 It is critical that the administration develop
15 data-driven protocols for communicating risk to the
16 public. According to FEMA's best practices for
17 issuing emergency alerts, an effective alert
18 "includes sufficient information for the public to
19 understand the incident and risk and to guide and
20 urge the public to take appropriate protective
21 action(s)." Right now, Notify NYC's alerts are brief,
22 and the content users received in advance of
23 September 29 was very similar to what they received
24 in advance of a much less extreme storm only a few
25 days later. This inconsistency can leave users unsure

2 whether to take these warnings seriously. MOCEJ's
3 upcoming study on Climate Vulnerability, Impact, and
4 Adaptation is engaging the private sector in
5 developing climate projections, characterizing
6 rainfall events, and creating a Coastal Flooding
7 Vulnerability Index. Using this type of information
8 to inform who receives alerts, when, and what actions
9 are suggested will create a clear and trustworthy
10 system that New Yorkers can rely on.

11 Yet clear and consistent information only goes so
12 far if it doesn't reach its intended audience. While
13 Notify NYC's 1.1 million subscriber number and
14 available language options are impressive, this
15 leaves more than 5.5 million New York City adults who
16 don't subscribe. The need for users to have an NYCID
17 or existing social media account, not to mention
18 remembering their password, to access this system
19 seems unnecessary and prohibitive and creates
20 concerns about data privacy.

21 The Comprehensive Plan for Brooklyn makes
22 additional recommendations for addressing storm
23 impacts in the borough, and we look forward to the
24 Council's partnership as we develop more specific
25 proposals. These include: Through a Zoning Text

3 Amendment, require evacuation plans for new
4 construction in floodplains; Require new construction
5 projects to follow the City's Climate Resiliency
6 Design Guidelines; Encourage the Department of
7 Environmental Protection (DEP) to upgrade sewer
8 infrastructure in areas that experience persistent
9 stormwater flooding; and Identify opportunities for
10 nature-based solutions for stormwater capture in the
11 public realm to mitigate flooding.

12 Borough President Reynoso also supports the three
13 proposals from Council Member Restler being heard
14 today regarding preparedness for air quality
15 emergencies. We submitted testimony to the Council on
16 this issue generally in September, and the BP wants
17 to commend Council Member Restler for developing
18 thoughtful, comprehensive, and data-driven solutions.

19 Thank you for the opportunity to speak today, we
20 look forward to working with the Council to create a
21 safer and greener city.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you for your testimony.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much.

24 We will now turn to public testimony. We will be
25 limiting public testimony today to two minutes each.
Please note that if your prepared testimony exceeds

3 two minutes, in addition to testifying before the
4 committees today, you may submit your full testimony
5 to the record for up to 72 hours after the close of
6 today's hearing by emailing it to
7 testimony@council.nyc.gov .

8 If you are here to testify in person, and you
9 have not yet completed a witness slip, please visit
10 the sergeant's table and complete a witness slip
11 now, even if you registered to testify online.

12 For in person panelists, please come up to the
13 table once your name has been called.

14 For virtual panelists, once your name has been
15 called, a member of our staff will unmute you, and
16 the Sergeant At Arms will set the timer and give you
17 the go ahead to begin. Please wait the sergeant to
18 announce that you may begin before delivering your
19 testimony.

20 Now, I will call up to testify in person, Raul
21 Rivera.

22 (PAUSE)

23 RAUL RIVERA: Good afternoon, or good morning. My
24 name is Raul Rivera, I am a TLC driver and a TLC
25 driver advocate. I am a native New Yorker. We may
be a little raw and a little harsh, but we do it with

2 love. I just want to read off a few points that I
3 just jotted down.

4 First, we say, no to City of Yes. That's what we
5 say. If it is coming from Adams, be very suspect...
6 "Weaponizing of climate change", that is happening.
7 That's a real thing, the "weaponization of climate
8 change." That's a real, real thing.

9 So, now I just want to read a few points:

10 The 1960's, oil gone in ten years; 1970's another
11 ice age in 10 years; 1980's acid rain will destroy
12 crops in 10 years; 1990's the ozone layer will be
13 gone in 10 years; 2000's icecaps will be gone in 10
14 years; none happened. But all resulted in more taxes.
15 We live in a concrete jungle. Concrete does not...
16 Concrete and ashfall do not absorb water. Stop the
17 "climate hoax". Greta Thunberg, everybody knows Greta
18 Thunberg, right? Greta Thunberg and AOC "sustainable
19 tanks and biodegradable missiles"(sic). Climate
20 change, the way it is being fed to New Yorkers and
21 Americans is a "hoax". I believe in climate change,
22 but not the way it is being fed to us. It is too bad
23 you guys aren't listening. You are looking at your
24 cellphones. I am trying to testify here, but nobody
25 is paying attention. Bob Holden, thank you for

2 listening. Thank you for paying attention. We thank
3 you so much, and, uh, that's it.

4 (PAUSE)

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.

7 We will now turn to online witnesses.

8 We will first hear from Victoria Sanders,
9 followed by Benjamin Young, followed by Adam Robers.
10 Please wait for the Sergeant At Arms to announce that
11 you may begin before starting your testimony.

12 And we will first hear from Victoria Sanders.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

14 VICTORIA SANDERS: Hi, my name is Victoria
15 Sanders, and I represent the New York City
16 Environmental Justice Alliance. We are a citywide
17 membership network linking grassroots organizations
18 from low-income communities of color and their
19 struggle for environmental justice. I will be
20 submitting longer written testimony, but I did want
21 to make a few key points here today to you.

22 So, first, I would like to lend NYC-EJA's support
23 to Council Member Restler's Air Quality Emergency
24 bills. These three bills show an awareness of the
25 realities that our city 's most vulnerable residents

3 are facing, and the care and intention that Council
4 Member Restler's team has put to understanding the
5 problems and finding concrete effective solutions to
6 work towards mitigating them. So, thank you so much
7 to Council Member Restler and your team. We hope
8 these bills will serve as blueprints for creating
9 bills and plans for all of the different types of
10 environmental and climate driven emergencies and
11 threats that New York City can expect to face now and
12 in the future. These threats are multiple, varied
13 and existential. People's homes, communities and
14 lives and are at ever increasing risk due to these
15 many escalating threats, and they don't impact the
16 city evenly. Low-income communities of color have
17 been and continue to be the most deeply negatively
18 impacted by these threats and therefore deserve our
19 special support and investment. We need the Mayor's
20 Office and city agencies to learn from past missteps
21 and adjust our emergency responses accordingly. They
22 can tell us over and over again about their existing
23 programs, but we know that these programs are not
24 enough. They are not reaching enough people with
25 their communications. They are not given accessible,
understandable, and timely advice and resources

2 whenever [INAUDIBLE] loom and occur. They are
3 falling short of their promises that they continue to
4 make. We can and should be doing more to protect the
5 most vulnerable in our city, and we ask City Council
6 to continue pressing for more, to continue demanding
7 better for your constituents.

8 So many plans and programs and promises have been
9 released and lauded, but little has actually come to
10 fruition. Please hold the City accountable for these
11 promises and the effectiveness of those promises. We
12 need more than theoretical unfunded plans, which have
13 good idea, but no clear approach to follow through.
14 But, there is so much planning and work that has
15 already been done during this and previous
16 administrations that we could draw from, including,
17 but limited to AdaptNYC, PlaNYC, Rainfall Ready NYC,
18 The New Normal Report, and more. But, where are we
19 on a lot of these plans? How much progress has been
20 made? And what can the City show us to prove that
21 these actions have been effective?

22 We need to stop restarting the process, doing
23 more research. We have so much information that we
24 should be using. So, we hope that the City will keep
25 that in mind.

3 So, we need to work smarter and meet the
4 undeniable realities of today. Thank you for your
5 time and the opportunity to testify today.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much for your
7 testimony.

8 We will now hear from Benjamin Young, followed by
9 Adam Roberts.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 BENJAMIN YOUNG: Hi, I am Benjamin Young Senior
12 Program Manager for Strategic Initiatives at the New
13 York Academy of Sciences, and I am here today to tell
14 you about a new initiative that is helping scientists
15 prepare for and respond to large scale, complex
16 crises like severe floods that you have been
17 discussing.

18 Founded by the New York Academy of Sciences last
19 year, building on lessons learned from global
20 responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, and with the idea
21 that science should prepare in advance of major
22 global crises, this initiative is called the
23 International Science Reserve. Since we launched
24 last year, over 6,000 scientist that joined the ISR,
25 from over 100 countries, we have a healthy

3 representation among New York based scientists from
4 our wonderful local institutions and organizations.

5 One of our programs consists of exercises based
6 around crisis scenarios to prepare scientists to use
7 their work in varied large scaled crises.

8 When a crisis hits, we facilitate access to
9 scientific and technical resources, such as
10 geospatial data and high performance computing. And,
11 recently, we convened a panel around large scale
12 transboundary flooding, an increasing issue for
13 cities worldwide, and something we know a thing or
14 two about in New York City.

15 Flooding is increasing in magnitude and frequency
16 around the world, with some cities suffering multiple
17 deadly floods over the course of just the past year -
18 such as in Kentucky and Florida. [BACKGROUND NOISE]
19 The World Bank reports that of the half billion
20 people worldwide at risk of flooding, one-third is
21 living in poverty, making them especially vulnerable.
22 And of course urban coastal areas, like New York
23 City, are particularly vulnerable as well.

24 So, we asked our panel to explore whether
25 scientific and technical experts can contribute to
flood preparation, prevention, and response. We

2 heard from a professor based in Nairobi, two U.S.
3 scientists, and expert in flood modeling from IBM,
4 and the chief meteorologist from a weather
5 forecasting startup that focuses on emergencies.
6 Some of the takeaways were about how scientists from
7 varied fields must work together, which is at the
8 core of what the International Science Reserve does,
9 and that one of the real challenges lies in
10 protecting the most vulnerable communities that we
11 were just talking about. There was also a discussion
12 of how emerging AI tools and datasets will have an
13 increasingly important role.

14 I will leave it at that, knowing that time is
15 limited, and just thank you very much for listening,
16 and please be in touch if you have any questions, or
17 if you want to hear more about the International
18 Science Reserve. Thank you very much.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much for your
20 testimony.

21 We will now hear from Adam Roberts.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

23 ADAM ROBERTS: Thank you for holding this hearing
24 today. I am Adam Roberts, Policy Director for the
25 Community Housing Improvement Program, also known as

3 CHIP. We represent New York's housing providers,
4 including apartment building owners and managers. We
5 are here to express concerns about the city's
6 policies regarding the notification of flooding and
7 other hazards for tenants.

8 In the last few years, the City has focused on
9 addressing safety risks to tenants through
10 notifications in leases. This has left tenants
11 overwhelmed with information, preventing them from
12 having an understanding of how to stay safe in their
13 homes.

14 Examining my own lease, 32 out of 49 pages, which
15 is 65% of my lease, is composed of legally mandated
16 notifications. There are two pages for bed bugs;
17 seven pages for a fire safety plan; one page for gas
18 leaks; two separate indoor allergen notifications,
19 one is one page and the other is two pages; fourteen
20 pages of an emergency preparedness guide; one page
21 for sprinkler disclosure; one page for stove knob
22 covers; one page for window guards; and two pages for
23 lead paint. Since I signed my lease, an additional
24 one page flood plain notification is now required.

25 Yet, the City is requiring more notifications in
leases. Last month, Introduction 1229-2023 was

3 introduced, requiring leases to include flood
4 evacuation plans. This flood evacuation plan would
5 join the already mandated emergency preparedness
6 guide and flood plain notification, both of which
7 already cover flooding.

8 Rather than overwhelming tenants with
9 information, much of which requires technical
10 expertise to understand, the Council should push for
11 policies that eliminate these various risks. While
12 removing hazards is expensive, doing so will be much
13 more impactful than notifications.

14 Rather than mandating more notifications for
15 flooding, the Council should be examining how to make
16 floods less deadly, such as funding the replacement
17 of gas boilers in flood-prone basements with heat
18 pumps on roofs. The City is already pursuing this
19 policy in NYCHA, yet has provided no funding to its
20 struggling rent-stabilized housing, much of which is
21 located in flood plains.

22 We hope that the Council will work to ensure only
23 the most critical information is provided to tenants,
24 that the information provided is brief and
25 comprehensible, and that eliminating hazards is
prioritized first and foremost.

2 Thank you

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much for your
4 testimony.

5 We have now heard from everyone who was signed up
6 to testify. If we have inadvertently missed anyone
7 who would like to testify in person, please visit the
8 sergeant's table and complete a witness slip now.

9 If we have inadvertently missed anyone who would
10 like to testify virtually, please use the Zoom Raise
11 Hand Function, and I will call on you in the order of
12 hands raised.

13 Seeing no one else, I would like to note that
14 written testimony, which will be reviewed in full by
15 committee staff, may be submitted to the record up to
16 72 hours after the close of the hearing by emailing
17 it to testimony@council.nyc.gov.

18 And now I will turn it back to Chair Ariola to
19 close out this hearing.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much.

21 I would like to thank everyone who came here
22 today to give public testimony, and who testified
23 from the administration.

24 I would like to thank our committee counsel,
25 Joshua Kingsley; William Hongach, Senior Policy

3 Analyst; and my Chief of Staff, Phyllis Inzerillo, as
4 well as Chair Brewer, for the wonderful hearing we
5 have had today, and for the information that was
6 garnered. Thank you so very much.

7 [GAVEL SOUND] [GAVELING OUT]
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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 November 29, 2023