

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

----- X

April 15, 2024
Start: 10:02 a.m.
Recess: 11:05 a.m.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Joann Ariola, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Carmen N. De La Rosa
Oswald Feliz
Kevin C. Riley
Susan Zhuang
James F. Gennaro

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Chief Michael Meyers, Chief of Safety Command of
Fire Department of New York

Chief Evan Suchecki, Chief of Fleet of Fire
Department of New York

Captain Michael Leo, Head of Robotics

Chief Daniel Murray, Chief of Hazardous Materials
at Fire Department of New York

Richard Nash, Fire Department of New York
Hazardous Materials

Jim Brosi, President of the Uniformed Fire
Officers Association

Adam Roberts, Policy Director for the Community
Housing Improvement Program

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone
3 check for the Committee on Fire and Emergency
4 Management. Today's date is April 15, 2024. We're
5 located in the Chambers. The recording is done by
6 Rocco Mesiti.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning and
8 welcome to the Committee on Fire Emergency
9 Management.

10 At this time, can everybody please
11 silence your cell phones.

12 If you wish to testify, please go up to
13 the Sergeant-at-Arms' desk to fill out a testimony
14 slip.

15 Written testimony can be emailed to
16 testimony@counsel.nyc.gov. Again, that is
17 testimony@counsel.nyc.gov.

18 At this time and going forward, no one is
19 to approach the dais. I repeat, no one is to approach
20 the dais.

21 Thank you for your cooperation.

22 Chair, we are ready to begin.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [GAVEL] Thank you.

24 Before we start the hearing, I would just like to
25 note who is here from the Fire Department to testify

2 today. We have Chief Evans Suchecki, Chief of Fleet;
3 Captain Michael Leo, Head of Robotics; Chief Michael
4 Meyers, Chief of Safety Command; Chief Daniel Murray,
5 Chief of Haz Mat; and Richard Nash, FDNY Haz Mat.
6 Thank you all for coming today.

7 Good morning, I am Council Member Joann
8 Ariola, and I am Chair to the Fire and Emergency
9 Management Committee. I want to thank you all for
10 being here today for the hearing, which is an
11 oversight of the state of the Fire Department's
12 equipment. Today's hearing, we hope to hear from the
13 Fire Department on the current state of their
14 equipment, which includes rigs, such as engines and
15 ladders, and field communication systems, such as
16 radio devices and various operational capabilities
17 the Department has improved over the years.
18 Additionally, we hope to discuss personal personnel
19 equipment, such as bunker gear and the Department's
20 capabilities to properly clean after firefighters
21 returned from their duties. In light of the
22 tremendous increase in e-bike-related fires in this
23 city we have seen in the past few years, it is in
24 this Committee's particular interest to hear how
25 personal gear is properly sanitized when returning

2 from fires attributed to lithium-ion batteries. We
3 also plan to examine the state of equipment used by
4 our City's emergency medical services and how the
5 Department has made improvements to administering
6 medical care and improving on EMS technology. I would
7 like to mention that last week, the Council passed
8 Intro. number 126-A, of which I am a co-sponsor, that
9 helps ensure the safety of our EMS personnel by
10 affording them proper ballistic and stab-resistant
11 vests. Furthermore, I will inquire about the City's
12 ambulance fleet and how the Department has improved
13 ambulance services over the years and if there are
14 any long-standing issues pertaining to ambulance
15 maintenance. I look forward to hearing from the
16 Administration as I feel this will be a thoroughly
17 informative hearing on the state of the Department's
18 equipment.

19 I will now address the members of the
20 Administration providing testimony today. Please
21 raise your right hands.

22 Do you affirm to tell the truth and
23 answer all questions to the best of your ability?

24 ADMINISTRATION PANEL: I do.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. You may
3 proceed.

4 CHIEF MEYERS: Good morning, Chair Ariola
5 and Members of the Fire and Emergency Committee. My
6 name is Michael Meyers, and I am the Chief of Safety
7 for the FDNY. I am joined today by Deputy Chief Dan
8 Murray of the FDNY Hazardous Materials Unit, Chief of
9 Fleet Services Evan Suchecki, Captain Mike Leo of the
10 Robotics Unit. We thank you for your opportunity to
11 discuss FDNY tools and equipment today.

12 As the Chief of Safety, I oversee the
13 safety of fire members, EMS members, and the
14 civilians who work for the Department. Ours is a very
15 dangerous job. We can't reduce all risk, but the
16 focus of the Safety Command is to reduce the risk to
17 our members to the greatest degree possible. My team
18 consists of the Research and Development Unit, which
19 works with members and outside vendors to ensure that
20 our tools and equipment are top of the line and are
21 suitable to meet the needs of the Department and also
22 to make sure that we keep our citizens safe. My unit
23 also includes the Fire Injury and Death Investigation
24 Unit, which undertakes an extensive review and
25 investigates all operations that result in a serious

2 injury or death of a firefighter. As we often say, no
3 member of the Department dies in vain. We know the
4 best way to honor a member who dies or suffers a
5 serious injury is to learn from the incident and make
6 any changes necessary to make the operation safer to
7 our members. Another unit within safety is the Handie
8 Talking Recording Unit. We record all communications
9 amongst our members so we routinely review these
10 communications from operations to understand what
11 went right, what went wrong, and where we can make
12 improvements. It's also an invaluable training
13 component to our field units to listen to themselves
14 on the fire ground as they go out and speak and
15 communicate with each other, and they'll know what
16 the right things to say on the fire ground and the
17 necessary things to say are. Safety Command also
18 includes three battalion chiefs and two captains who
19 respond to third alarm fires and higher to assist at
20 the scene of complex incidents. We work with the FDNY
21 Bureau of Health Services to understand injury trends
22 so we can assess whether any equipment or tools used
23 in the field are malfunctioning or are not working
24 properly for our needs so we can make adjustments. We
25 also work with the Bureau of Training to make sure

2 that we use what we learn from accident
3 investigations to help improve member training and
4 reduce the number of injuries that are suffered in
5 the field. We work with the Fire and EMS operations
6 to address methods and procedures in the field that
7 might lead to unsafe conditions.

8 We also consider it part of our mission
9 to educate our members about safety issues and help
10 them understand on an individual basis how they can
11 help themselves and help the Department stay safe. We
12 do this through producing literature, webcasts, and
13 many other educational materials that we distribute
14 to the field on a daily basis. As an example, we have
15 created materials to help members learn about their
16 gear and personal protective equipment so that they
17 have an understanding of how their equipment works
18 and how to make sure that they are using it properly
19 so they can be the safest possible. Historically, the
20 Fire Department has moved forward in leaps and bounds
21 in terms of the safety level of the gear that our
22 members wear and use when they operate at fires and
23 emergencies. When I first joined the Fire Department
24 33 years ago, the gear was not what we had today. We
25 got bunker gear. When I first came on, we had rubber

2 boots, a helmet, and a fire coat. Our time, as a
3 direct result of the attention that the Department
4 has given to the safety of our equipment, our gear,
5 has evolved into a protective bunker gear ensemble.
6 We have a high bar for equipment to be used by the
7 FDNY firefighters. It has to be maneuverable, it has
8 to be durable, and has to provide the fire protection
9 necessary to avoid burns and injuries. Considering
10 that number of burns and injuries that we have
11 regularly sustained using the equipment of my youth
12 versus what our members operate in today, there
13 simply is no comparison. Our members now have a
14 significantly greater chance of ending their shift
15 safely than at any time in the history of the FDNY.
16 It's the metric that we use to measure our success.
17 We want everybody to go home at the end of the day in
18 the same condition that they arrived when they came
19 in, and we will never stop trying to improve our
20 methods and our equipment to make sure our members
21 have the best possible chance of being safe.

22 My colleagues who were here with me today
23 all have that same mission, and the units contribute
24 to that goal of safety in different ways. Chief
25 Murray and his team at Haz Mat are experts in

1 understanding how to safely deal with hazardous
2 materials. They receive specialized training to
3 identify and isolate hazards, protect first
4 responders, and rescue and decontaminate potential
5 victims. Haz Mat is trained to perform at a wide
6 range of incidents from minor spills or chemical
7 releases to full scale terrorism involving chemical,
8 biological radiological, nuclear, and explosive
9 threats. In recent years, they've developed and
10 executed procedures for handling incidents involving
11 lithium-ion batteries and micro-mobility devices. As
12 this Committee knows, lithium-ion batteries may
13 present enormous challenges to firefighters, whether
14 they are at the source of the fire or they become
15 involved in a fire that originated from a separate
16 cause. Even after a fire is extinguished, these
17 batteries have shown a propensity for reignition and
18 explosion. The Department has implemented a variety
19 of procedures to respond effectively and as safely as
20 possible. This includes responding companies
21 submerging batteries and hazardous materials units
22 taking possession, overpacking these batteries and
23 materials, maintaining backup hose lines, and
24 ensuring that these products which emit dangerous
25

2 toxins when compromised are properly packed and
3 transported after a fire incident.

4 Chief Suchecki oversees FDNY's Fleet
5 Services. His team keeps Department apparatus in good
6 repair and available for frontline first responders.
7 The Department has roughly 2,500 vehicles in all,
8 including many specialized fire engines and EMS
9 ambulances. Vehicles come in and out of FDNY repair
10 shops for a variety of reasons, including
11 preventative maintenance, accidents, replacing parts
12 and equipment, and upgrades. Fire Department
13 apparatus receive a lot of wear and tear on the city
14 streets, and ambulances, in particular, operate on a
15 near-constant basis, 24 hours a day, so they receive
16 oil changes, brake checks, tire inspections, and
17 other preventative measures more frequently than the
18 average consumer vehicle.

19 Lastly, Captain Leo's Robotics Unit plays
20 a vital role in innovation and enhancing Fire
21 Department operations through cutting edge
22 technology. The Fire Department was the first City
23 agency to operate a drone in the field. We've come a
24 long way since the original models, which were
25 tethered and limited in their maneuverability.

2 Captain Leo's team monitors and reviews evolving
3 drone technology on an ongoing basis, assessing new
4 features and advances in design and upgrading the
5 Fire Department's fleet so that we're using the best
6 equipment to assist our members at incidents. Drone
7 pilots receive extensive training that focuses on
8 safely flying their aircraft, providing useful
9 information and doing so in a manner that preserves
10 the privacy of individuals. Drones have become a
11 tremendously valuable component of an emergency
12 response. The information they provide to incident
13 commanders cannot be duplicated from the ground or
14 through radio transmissions. We brought a video today
15 that we think will give a clear idea of the utility.
16 The team has recently expanded to include robotics
17 including a dog that we will show you a demonstration
18 on today and then gladly take your questions
19 afterwards. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. Before we
21 see your presentation, I'd just like to note that
22 Council Member Susan Zhuang has joined us.

23 We're just fixing a technical difficulty.
24 It'll be just a moment.

2 CHIEF LEO: Okay, right here, I'm just
3 going to give a little commentary on this. It's a
4 third alarm. This is a recent fire in the Bronx on
5 April 5th. You can see how advantageous it is to have
6 an aerial image. It adds so much safety and
7 efficiency to our operations and lets the incident
8 commanders make real-time decisions of where the fire
9 is, how we're progressing, and the overall operation.
10 We can go to the next slide.

11 These are very short clips, but it'll
12 show you. The next slide is our thermal imaging
13 sensor. It's the exact same. It's being recorded at
14 the same time as the other image, but here, now we
15 can see a lot of the hot spots, the red spots, where
16 heat is being emitted from, and then we can slide,
17 these are very short clips, we could go to the next
18 one. The next one is from, let's see we'll advance
19 it.

20 This is from Easter in Brooklyn, and this
21 is a side-by-side comparison of the two sensors, and
22 they both have great worth. You can see that the roof
23 has collapsed into the building. You can see the hot
24 spots again. One of the things we're able to do is
25 give the tower ladders who are applying the water a

2 view of what they're hitting because sometimes they
3 can't see with the amount of smoke, and you can see
4 from the left image how much clearly we can see with
5 the thermal image in advance.

6 This is the crane collapse on 10th
7 Avenue, and this was an event that I don't think
8 we've ever really seen or had to deal with ever
9 before. It did damage to the building across the
10 street and then fell to the ground. We can advance to
11 the next one. Can we go back to the, yeah, that
12 should be a video. All right, if it isn't playing, so
13 we had a great view of this crane from the drone so
14 much so we can see under it, around it, over it, very
15 close up. We were able to share the video feed with
16 the members operating the hose line and as they were
17 operating, they were far off and it was very
18 difficult for them to gauge but, as we shared that
19 feed, they were able to boost the pressure and get
20 the water to where it needed to be to extinguish this
21 fire. We can advance.

22 Yep, so this is the Ann Street collapse.
23 We can play the video. You can see Bergh, which we
24 have here today entered the building. That was a
25 decision made by the incident commander. We had a

2 secondary collapse, a small one, but we didn't want
3 to send members in, and at the time that was almost
4 the last resort where we had the robot go in to
5 identify a patient as well as look at the structural
6 stability of the building. We can advance.

7 This is a video now of the drones
8 operating at that event. This was one of the first
9 events that we had multiple robotic equipment operate
10 at the same time including other agencies as New York
11 City Emergency Management as well as NYPD were there,
12 and having this overhead imagery was, again, very
13 advantageous for the incident commander to see what
14 was going on with the building and where members were
15 and very good for safety. We can advance.

16 This is Life Safety Overwatch that we do
17 at Rockaway Beach now, otherwise maybe known as Shark
18 Watch. We started Shark Watch last summer. It went
19 quickly in the beginning because we were asked to do
20 it in the mid-season, and we learned a lot over the
21 half of the year.

22 We could advance one to the next video.
23 Hopefully, this plays. Okay, so you could see here
24 what we could see from the sky. We could see rip
25 currents, and we could see a person struggling so it

2 was great that we could see swimmers in distress so,
3 although we're looking for sharks, the risk
4 assessment shows that swimmers in distress happen
5 much more often so we deal with the lifeguards and
6 basically communicate with them of where somebody
7 might be. They did a phenomenal job. On this
8 particular day, we watched the lifeguards do 15
9 rescues just like this one, just in that one area so
10 the lifeguards just do an incredible job. We're able
11 to identify those rip currents at the beach and tell
12 the lifeguards hey, maybe we should keep people out
13 of the water to prevent that from happening in the
14 first place. At the end of the season, so we work
15 outside of the lifeguard hours just by an hour on
16 each end, at the end of the season while we were
17 wrapping up, we found a woman who was struggling
18 outside and now there's no lifeguards on duty so the
19 drone actually found the woman and basically the
20 drone, this would be one of the first times that I'd
21 say with certainty that the drone saved that woman's
22 life. We were about to go in the water ourselves, but
23 we found some lifeguards who were off duty walking
24 away, and they went in the water without their safety
25 equipment and rescued her, and that was a telltale

2 sign that these drones are very important for water
3 rescues as well.

4 We could stop the video. That's the end.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: As a Council Member
6 that represents the Rockaways, that is such an
7 important feature for us because we have so many
8 drownings on the Rockaway Peninsula over every
9 summer, and you're right, it's always on off hours
10 for the lifeguards, and that is a welcome component,
11 so thank you for that.

12 What is the current protocol for
13 equipment exposure, particularly bunker gear to
14 lithium-ion batteries? This is something that's new.
15 I know we're really like it's evolving so we would
16 love to hear what's happening.

17 CHIEF MEYERS: We've had lithium-ion
18 batteries, right? They didn't just come into
19 existence. They're just more prevalent in society now
20 today so we have had fires in the past where we had
21 exposure to them. It's only now that it's, as we go
22 more green, that they're becoming greater and greater
23 in society so right now, actually, we're
24 participating in a study with Arizona State
25 University where we're actually taking gear and also

2 our members' blood from our members when they are
3 exposed to these fires, some of our special
4 operations folks, and we're sending the blood out to
5 Arizona State and the gear out there as cutting edge
6 to try to see what people are exposed to with this.
7 In New York City, we're getting more of these types
8 of fires and raising the awareness around the country
9 as well to other departments so we're at the top tip
10 of the spear as far as right now trying to figure out
11 exactly how it affects our members and also cleaning
12 up that gear and how it affects the gear as well.
13 After a lithium-ion battery fire, Safety Command
14 would send out an email to our units who operated
15 there to have their gear sent to our Decon Support
16 Unit in order to get it clean, which is over in
17 Corona.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I just would like to
19 note that we've been joined by Council Member Carmen
20 De La Rosa.

21 You take the bunker gear and then you
22 send it out for sanitizing, and is it the same type
23 of sanitizing that's done on a regular bunker gear
24 from a regular fire when the firefighters send their
25 bunk gear out.

2 CHIEF MEYERS: Sure. NFPA standards,
3 National Fire Protection Association standards, have
4 us send gear out. Each set of gear has to be cleaned
5 twice a year so we send that out to an independent
6 service provider to go out and get cleaned. Right
7 now, we're using Gear Wash, which is in the Bronx.
8 That contract is up and expiring so I'm not sure what
9 fiscal is going to do with it yet. It could be Gear
10 Wash or Lion Care which is someone else who will be
11 operating within the city, they have to set up a
12 facility, but what we do is we send that there, they
13 inspect the gear, clean the gear, and repair any gear
14 as necessary. We're lucky enough on the FDNY, through
15 the help of the City Council, in the past to have a
16 Decon Support Unit that operates out of Corona that's
17 able to clean up to 100 sets of bunker gear a day so
18 any time we have anything exposed to a blood borne
19 pathogen, haz mat, or if our members feel like their
20 gear needs to be cleaned, we can clean it even more
21 so than what the national standard is by sending it
22 to them and having it back within 24 to 48 hours.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: That's great, and we
24 are, as a Body working, on getting more, pulling more
25 money together so that we can get more laundry sites

2 for the FDNY to have their bunker gear cleaned
3 because that's very, very important, especially their
4 hoods, as you know, because of the uptick in thyroid
5 cancer.

6 I'm going to switch gears a little.

7 During Fiscal Year 2021, there were 516 ambulances in
8 service per day when compared to 466 this Fiscal
9 Year. What do we attribute that decrease to?

10 CHIEF SUCHECKI: As far as the actual
11 ambulances in service, when we hit a high, taking
12 into consideration that about 15 percent of that
13 number is our voluntary out-of-service that we're
14 taking out of service to do our preventative
15 maintenance cycle. We take those out of service,
16 about 12 of them a day, to prevent further out-of-
17 service time and mechanical issues, and what we do is
18 we bring every ambulance in, we do a full 70-point
19 inspection, which takes up to several days sometimes
20 to ensure that the vehicle is safe and road ready so
21 now that COVID set us back when we were experiencing
22 shortages with chassis and chip manufacturing, we
23 kind of a slightly older fleet than we did at that
24 time so right now, where we have 61 percent of our
25 vehicles under warranty, at that point, it was a

2 higher number, which attributed to a lower out-of-
3 service.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I know there have
5 been a number of reports that came out that shows a
6 decrease in response times but, of course, not to
7 critical responses. We have to make that clear.
8 Critical responses are being attended to within a
9 short period of time, but do you think that what you
10 just mentioned has affected the decrease in some
11 ambulance response times?

12 CHIEF SUCHECKI: I think it may have a
13 slight impact on decreasing response times. However,
14 Fleet Operations' main responsibility is to ensure
15 that EMS operations has enough vehicles on the road
16 to run their specified amount of tours so, regardless
17 of what our out-of-service percentages, we always
18 ensure that they have enough ambulances to put their
19 personnel on the road and respond to the assignments.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And does the
21 Department plan to increase the daily number of
22 ambulances? Are you purchasing more ambulances or
23 we're kind of at a standstill?

24 CHIEF SUCHECKI: So we're on a steady
25 purchasing cycle. We'd like to get that down a little

2 bit so we can ensure that all of our ambulances are
3 under warranty, which would obviously decrease the
4 amount of out-of-service time and work that's done
5 in-house, but COVID set us back with that. We were
6 probably at a six-year replacement cycle where now
7 we're at between six and seven and, at a five-year
8 warranty on those vehicles, obviously it would be
9 better for us to have them all under warranty where
10 the manufacturer or the vendor would be responsible
11 for any work.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I was encouraged to
13 hear that the type of maintenance and inspections are
14 more often than you would do on a regular vehicle so
15 that's very good to know.

16 CHIEF SUCHECKI: Correct. It's much more
17 frequent so ambulance preventative maintenance cycle
18 is every 45 days regardless of the amount of mileage
19 on the vehicle because every minute that the vehicle
20 is idling when it's on an assignment actually
21 attributes to mileage driven so it doesn't actually
22 incur mileage on the vehicle, but it incurs that wear
23 and tear so we use that 45-day number to ensure that
24 the vehicles come in, we do that maintenance, we do a
25 top-to-bottom maintenance, and that actually prevents

2 further problems down the road for these vehicles
3 that are running 24/7.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah, and the EMS,
5 you guys do a great job.

6 CHIEF SUCHECKI: Appreciate it. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Really great job.

8 We see a lot of different technological
9 things that are coming in, whether it's the dog or
10 drones. How is the Department administering training
11 for these types of new technologies to EMS and Fire
12 Department?

13 CHIEF MEYERS: Yeah, so usually when we
14 bring a new technology in, what we do with research
15 and development and with a couple of our committees
16 is that we'll take something in, we'll look at it.
17 Operations, Training, Safety, Fleet as well as our
18 Fiscal folks will come in, we'll see how it fits in.
19 Can we use it? Can we not use it? We meet as a group
20 and then from there we'll decide if we want to pilot
21 something. Usually, we'll go with a nine-month pilot.
22 That way we get three seasons out of it because we
23 know in New York we get all kinds of different
24 weather so we want to make sure that, most
25 manufacturers or people that make things they'll tell

1 us that it's the most phenomenal product ever. We
2 sometimes discover during that nine months that, like
3 they say, you can make it here, you can make it
4 anywhere. Sometimes they can't make it here so that's
5 why it's important before we spend our money and put
6 all that effort into it. We make sure that it can
7 work so we'll grab a small part of the city depending
8 upon who we think will best be suited for, and we'll
9 put the pilot in that particular area and then make
10 sure that it works properly before we put anything
11 out there. Once we do find a product that works or a
12 technology that works, we'll immediately go to
13 training. We do an almost six-sided approach, just
14 like we do with searching a building, and we'll send
15 it out, stuff on our DiamondPlate. We'll have LMS,
16 which is another system, a learning management system
17 that we have, as well as going to do some face-to-
18 face training and also some hands-on training with
19 that as well to make sure that everybody knows how to
20 use it properly because technology is only as good as
21 the people who know how to use it.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Right, and how often
24 are those training classes held?

2 CHIEF MEYERS: It would all depend on what
3 kind of technology that we're implementing, how often
4 that we do that. Most of the time, we'll go by
5 whatever the NFPA standards are. When we first
6 initially introduce something to the field, we make
7 sure that we have a lot more training involved with
8 it at that time than when it's out there and people
9 are regularly using it, but we have drill periods
10 each day in each firehouse and also EMS has a drill
11 period as well where we're looking at stuff for at
12 least an hour a day and working with our tools and
13 equipment to make sure we know how to use it properly
14 and even that new folks coming into the firehouse
15 know where it is, how to use it, and how to work
16 proficiently with it.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I do notice that you
18 brought some cadets with you today so I just want to
19 say to the cadets, you should be proud because you're
20 entering a wonderful Department and you never know,
21 one of you may be sitting up here so pay attention.
22 One day, it may be you that's being questioned by
23 another set of Council Members, but I'm really glad
24 that you did bring the cadets because it's important
25 that they know what happens.

2 You mentioned earlier that firefighting
3 equipment has changed from when maybe you started to
4 now. Can you just give us like what type of
5 improvements have happened with the gear and the
6 equipment over the years?

7 CHIEF MEYERS: Sure, absolutely. One of
8 the biggest changes obviously was when we got bunker
9 gear in 1993, which was the result of a Watts Street
10 fire right here in Manhattan, where three of our
11 firefighters were lost at that time, then the City
12 Council along with the Mayor at the time, Mayor
13 Giuliani, made sure that we got bunker gear at that
14 point. A lot of the country was using it at that
15 point. We were one of the last departments to move in
16 that direction. Not sure of the reasons why.
17 Obviously, I was a brand new firefighter then, but
18 that was one of the biggest technological changes for
19 us was getting that on. A lot of different training
20 and a lot of came of that. When we're in our full
21 bunker gear ensemble now, even with the latest and
22 greatest, which we're always trying out, having
23 vendors come in and approaching our research
24 development almost on a weekly basis, even with that
25 ensemble, every firefighter walking into a building

2 with their breathing device and bunker gear on has
3 over 100 pounds of equipment on them so they're
4 getting a full workload and we have to make sure that
5 gear breathes right, works right, and that we're able
6 to operate in that to help protect the citizens of
7 New York so that's been the greatest advance.

8 Again, I couldn't help but watching those
9 drone footage before, which is an incredible advance
10 for me as an incident commander. When I think about
11 1991 when I first came on, we would have to describe
12 to the incident commander what we saw and what was
13 happening and he would have to draw a visual or she
14 would have to draw a visual in their mind as to what
15 we were describing as we were at that level. That was
16 before the advent of cell phones and everything being
17 out there. It's just incredible to see how now we get
18 that in there. It also helps us save police aviation.
19 We team up with police aviation. We put a battalion
20 chief to do air recon. They go to Floyd Bennett Field
21 and then they'll fly them to wherever our fire ground
22 was so most of the time as an incident commander on
23 scene at a large-scale emergency, I can turn that
24 asset back now and then that way the police can use
25 their asset for what they need it for, and we have

2 that drone footage that's providing the most amazing
3 information to us. We also have our Handie Talkie,
4 our radios, which again, when I first came on, every
5 member of the Department didn't have a radio on so
6 now every member of our Department has a radio with
7 an emergency alert button so that we're able to
8 communicate if we get in any kind of trouble on the
9 fire ground or on the emergency ground so we're able
10 to communicate that to the incident commander, and
11 we're able to get help much faster and much quicker
12 than what we would have been in the 1990s so to speak
13 so we're always on the cutting edge of everything
14 that happens technologically and being the largest
15 fire department in the country, second largest in the
16 world but, still, I think we're the best in the
17 world. We're always having people come in to do what
18 we need them to do and show us all their latest and
19 greatest stuff because if they have it, we'd like to
20 see it and see if it could help save some citizens.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: That's wonderful, and
22 when the bunker gear needs replacement or the Scott
23 Paks or any apparatus that you spoke about, I know
24 that a lot of times when we fund things, procurement
25 can take forever. What is the time frame from the

2 time that you need the new apparatus to the time that
3 you get it?

4 CHIEF SUCHECKI: So if you're referring to
5 a fire apparatus, the Department is under contractual
6 obligation to replace at certain timelines as
7 negotiated with the City so we work with our Fiscal
8 Department and OMB to ensure that the funding is in
9 place in order for us to get purchase orders in place
10 and deal with the vendor to do our best to meet those
11 obligations of mandatory replacements.

12 CHIEF MEYERS: As far as bunker gear
13 replacement goes, we have a quartermaster system
14 located out of Fort Totten in Queens where if a
15 member has gear that for some reason that we need to
16 retire or put out of service because of something
17 it's been exposed to, what we can do then is send the
18 member to Fort Totten to that quartermaster system,
19 they could get replacement gear almost immediately
20 that day or the next day whenever they get the chance
21 to go there so we have stuff in stock on a regular
22 basis to make sure we're able to do that.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Do my colleagues have
24 any questions right now?

1
2 Okay, then I shall continue. I want to
3 talk about the CAD system. What enhancements, if any,
4 has the Department made to their Computer-Aided
5 Dispatch or CAD system?

6 CHIEF MEYERS: So this would not be my
7 area of expertise, but I know that the CAD system was
8 recently updated on the Fire side. I believe EMS is
9 going into a contract or they have an RFI out there
10 right now to look for vendors to see who's going to
11 make up that CAD system. Evan probably would be able
12 to speak a little bit better about the EMS system,
13 but the Fire system was just recently done. They had
14 a couple of little tweaks in the beginning, just like
15 any new computer system that goes citywide, but I
16 think that they've corrected any issues that they
17 might've had, and I know that the Fire side is, when
18 I talk to the folks in communications, extremely
19 happy with the product that they have and it was
20 developed. The one we had before that was from 1971
21 so you can imagine that it was long overdue to be
22 replaced so it's a much more efficient and proficient
23 system for the Fire side, and I know EMS should be
24 working their way towards that soon.

2 CHIEF SUCHECKI: Yeah, just like Chief
3 Meyers says, it's really not my area of expertise,
4 but I know that the entire Technology Department uses
5 the best of their abilities to support the historical
6 legacy system and keep it up and running while
7 they're moving towards procuring a new system.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay, when the
9 Department needs more resources such as technological
10 advances in equipment, what are the steps that you
11 take to ensure that this is needed, and are there any
12 federal constraints that the Department encounters
13 when looking to expand their technological equipment
14 used in firefighting and emergency medical services?

15 CHIEF MEYERS: Usually, the steps that we
16 would go to, again, would first be to identify the
17 product. We'd have to see what we wanted or what we
18 thought would be helpful to both the Department and
19 also making sure that it works for the citizens in
20 New York City so what we would do at that point is we
21 would have a discussion with Operations and the Chief
22 of Department and Commissioner's Office if we really
23 needed something or thought something would really
24 enhance our operations just to make sure that
25 everybody's on the same page. At that point, actually

2 federal, we don't really have constraints as far as
3 that goes. A lot of time we get a lot of our new
4 stuff through grant funding, and, also, we also get
5 it thankfully from you folks in the City Council
6 working with us as well. Almost every Council Member
7 comes to the Department at some point during the year
8 and to our Borough Commanders and offers help, which
9 we greatly appreciate in getting those tools and
10 technologies out there because it does cut down on
11 the process that would ordinarily take, I would say
12 if we saw something we like today, on an ordinary
13 basis it takes about two years for us after we pilot
14 it and then to be able to purchase it and get it in
15 service with training, that would take about two
16 years. By working with the City Council and also
17 working with our grant office who works with federal
18 and state, a lot of times we can cut down on that
19 significantly, but we'd get that in service probably
20 within a year so it cuts the time in half.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. I
22 appreciate it.

23 Let's talk about the Marine Fire
24 Suppression Operation. How many vessels are there in
25 the Department right now?

2 CHIEF MEYERS: Again, not my area of
3 expertise. I believe Marine Unit-wise, I know we have
4 three stations. I think we have two big boats, one in
5 Staten Island, one in Brooklyn, one in Manhattan, so
6 I'd say three of the larger scale boats, and then we
7 have probably about 20 to 25 smaller vessels that can
8 respond much more quickly, and then during the summer
9 we also put units in service in the areas that are
10 more used by our residents for water recreation and a
11 lot more boats on the water during the summer so I
12 would say roughly about 20 units go in service to
13 assist with that effort as well making sure, again,
14 that we can protect the people in New York who are on
15 the water as well as on the land.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah, you were almost
17 down one so I'm glad you got it back. That was a very
18 important one actually.

19 How often do the vessels require
20 maintenance?

21 CHIEF MEYERS: So I would say again that
22 much like fleet services, I would think Marine is the
23 same. I would think that they probably go on a
24 quarterly basis. We have a whole section dedicated
25 over at the Brooklyn Navy Yard that takes care of all

2 those vessels and make sure that they're always in
3 proper working order. Every time I go over by there,
4 I know that they're taking something apart, changing
5 something, changing the oil. I wouldn't know the
6 exact scheduling on that, but I would guess it's the
7 same thing, quarterly and then yearly certifications
8 probably that they have to have in order to stay in
9 service.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: How many firefighters
11 do you have on that specific unit?

12 CHIEF MEYERS: It depends on the size of
13 the boat. I know on the largest scale boats we have
14 about eight. On the smaller boats, we'd have three.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah. I had the great
16 pleasure of going out on one once we took a ride out
17 and extremely impressive.

18 This is the last part of the questioning,
19 but I'm not sure that anyone has an area of expertise
20 in like firehouse facilities and any type of
21 maintenance? Would that be something that is under
22 your purview?

23 CHIEF MEYERS: Again, we could broadly
24 answer those questions. Being in Safety, I get a lot

2 of those different issues that come to us so I could
3 definitely talk about some of them.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So how often are
5 firehouses visited for regular maintenance to see if
6 they need plumbing or any type of roof work or things
7 of that nature?

8 CHIEF MEYERS: Yeah, what we usually would
9 do if we were in the firehouse, if you're working
10 there is you would put a work order into our
11 Buildings and Maintenance Division. Again, since
12 COVID, they're down a great number of folks and
13 people like a lot of the different entities but, if
14 they put a work order in, depending upon they'll
15 prioritize it based on how quickly they need to get
16 there to fix it, but they'll respond in to fix that
17 or repair those as soon as possible. We also get a
18 yearly inspection of our facilities by a Deputy Chief
19 each year. We'll walk through with the members to do
20 that.

21 I'll let Evan talk about EMS as far as
22 how that goes.

23 CHIEF SUCHECKI: It's a similar setup
24 where, as work is needed, you put something in the
25 system and Facilities will come out and evaluate it

2 based on priority need and the State as well also
3 inspects for the EMS stations, I believe every five
4 years.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay, great, and you
6 were talking earlier about safety equipment on their
7 body, radios and such. Do they have locators on their
8 gear as well in case they're stuck in a building?

9 CHIEF MEYERS: Unfortunately, at this
10 time, still no one has developed the technology in
11 order to give us the location of a member exactly.
12 Each mask has a device in it where if we're on the
13 same level as them, we have a Pak Tracker that can
14 get us to that member if they're in distress but,
15 unfortunately, we don't have anything yet outside of
16 a building or no vendor has come up with. Again, they
17 can show us if we're on the same level or where they
18 are in a building, but they can't tell us what floor
19 they're on so depending upon what borough you're
20 operating in, obviously, that could be a difficult
21 task. We could see where they are, but we wouldn't
22 know what floor they're on so companies are trying to
23 develop it as quickly as possible. We're constantly
24 looking for it. I know the Department sends myself
25 and a bunch of people from Research and Development

2 out to conferences to check with vendors all the time
3 to see what they have, and nobody has really come up
4 with anything yet that would work in New York City.
5 Again, we're a very complex city, being five
6 boroughs, completely different construction in each
7 borough, so it's very difficult to find a technology
8 that would work in each and every borough.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I appreciate that.

10 If there are no questions from Members of
11 the panel?

12 Okay, then I think we can dismiss our...

13 CHIEF LEO: Would you like to see a
14 demonstration of the robot real quick?

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I would love to see a
16 demonstration of the robot.

17 CHIEF LEO: We'll do this real quick.

18 Okay, so this is this is one of our ground robots.

19 It's made by Boston Dynamics. The model is Spot

20 Explorer, but we named this one Bergh. Bergh is named

21 after Henry Bergh who was the founder of the ASPCA

22 and also a New Yorker. This robot works in

23 conjunction with another robot, and they could

24 communicate with each other, and both of them carry

25 different sensors to do a specific job. They respond

2 to subterranean incidents, hazardous material
3 incidents, collapsed structures, and they basically
4 represent a response for a low occurrence, high
5 consequence event, something that's very severe.
6 We've had robots in the past that had tracks, but we
7 found that the quadruped, which makes it look like a
8 dog almost, is advantageous and it helps to traverse
9 mild-to-medium terrains up to 12 inches so it moves
10 in a way that is effective and can go up and down
11 stairs as well.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Extremely, extremely
13 and, even though he's a robot dog, I can't help but
14 fall in love with you. Thank you so much for that
15 demonstration.

16 CHIEF LEO: You're welcome.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay, so the panel is
18 dismissed, and thank you so much.

19 Okay, we're going to get back to work
20 now.

21 Thank you all for coming.

22 Okay, before we begin the public
23 testimony, I just want to read some public comment
24 protocols.

2 I now open the hearing for public
3 testimony. I remind members of the public that this
4 is a government proceeding and that decorum shall be
5 observed at all times. As such, members of the public
6 shall remain silent at all times.

7 The witness table is reserved for people
8 who wish to testify. No video recording or
9 photography is allowed from the witness table.
10 Further, members of the public may not present audio
11 or video recordings as testimony but may submit
12 transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant-at-
13 Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

14 If you wish to speak on today's hearing,
15 please fill out the appearance card with the
16 Sergeant-at-Arms and wait to be recognized. When
17 recognized, you will be given three minutes to speak
18 on today's hearing topic, the State of the FDNY's
19 Equipment.

20 If you have a written statement or
21 additional written testimony you wish to submit for
22 the record, please provide a copy of that testimony
23 to the Sergeant-at-Arms.

24 You may also email written testimony to
25 testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours of this

2 hearing. Audio and video recordings will not be
3 accepted.

4 For folks testifying via Zoom, which we
5 do have today, I will call your name when it's your
6 turn to provide testimony and you will be unmuted at
7 that time.

8 At this time, I'd like to recognize Jim
9 Brosi to testify.

10 JIM BROSI: Good morning. My name is Jim
11 Brosi. I'm the President of the Uniformed Fire
12 Officers Association, and I appreciate you having
13 this hearing on FDNY equipment. It is our belief that
14 the greatest piece of equipment that the FDNY offers
15 is its personnel.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Just going to ask
17 people to either close the door in the back or we can
18 keep it down a bit.

19 Excuse me and I'm sorry.

20 JIM BROSI: No problem. As I stated, I
21 believe the best piece of equipment the FDNY can
22 offer is its personnel. I come here today before you
23 to discuss the expansion of Citi Field. As it has
24 been proposed, the Citi Field expansion is creating a
25 new neighborhood and, as you said in your testimony

2 prior to this, was that timeline matters. How long
3 does it take to get a piece of equipment? How long
4 does it take to purchase an apparatus? The question
5 is how far in advance do we have to prepare for a
6 firehouse? We've already seen the impact of Hudson
7 Yards, an error in a neighborhood that did not exist,
8 that increased the number of responses in the
9 surrounding units in an isolated area by somewhere
10 between 1,500 and 2,000 runs over the last decade.
11 Those runs will only increase as the expansion
12 increases. They are isolated by access points due to
13 the building and the street construction. Citi Field
14 is an exact replica of Hudson Yards, except more
15 isolated. It has more overlapping transportation from
16 both Long Island Railroad and the 7 train. It has
17 only local access via Northern Boulevard or the
18 Roosevelt Avenue Bridge. It is isolated by Flushing
19 Meadow Park and is blocked out by the Grand Central
20 Parkway. The units around that area already doing
21 7,000 runs. The City has already sought fit to right
22 a hotel as well as a school in the area because
23 according to the (INAUDIBLE), they are developing a
24 neighborhood that did not exist. It is one thing to
25 develop a (INAUDIBLE) around Barkley Center that was

2 already a highly dense wood-framed area and replace
3 it with high-rise multiple dwellings, which is why
4 you've only seen a moderate impact in that running.
5 What you will see in the Citi Field, Flushing area is
6 you will see a depletion of services, a dramatic
7 safety impact because those units cannot absorb any
8 more running. They are already somewhere in the area
9 of 5,300, 5,800 runs. The distance from those places
10 will increase response times and the vertical impact
11 of those high-rise buildings will make it very
12 difficult to reach those occupants. There is very
13 little ladder company access. It is surrounded by two
14 single engine companies, and there will be very
15 little support for those people who want to
16 investigate these emergencies. We have done studies
17 on this through a collaboration with the Columbia
18 University where we had proposed that prior to a
19 zoning change that the City makes a provision either
20 through a zoning variance or through some other
21 agreement where they purchase property, even if there
22 isn't an immediate use for a firehouse, that we
23 anticipate as the population grows, as the running
24 becomes too over burdensome on the surrounding units,
25 that that firehouse or that EMS station gets

1 developed but, unless we build that in advance as we
2 did in the back end of say Lincoln Center where we
3 proposed a firehouse that sits behind, where it does
4 not aesthetically take away from the area, people
5 aren't affected by the noise, but that these
6 facilities are available. Once the site is built,
7 just like in Hudson Yards, there is no place to add a
8 firehouse and the property is too expensive for the
9 City to purchase. This must be planned. Now we must
10 put this on our timeline. We've discussed every other
11 aspect of the property except fire protection and EMS
12 protection, and that's the number one thing you
13 should provide other than medical facilities,
14 schooling, and policing when you develop a
15 neighborhood, especially one being developed from
16 scratch.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much for
19 your testimony. I was unaware that a firehouse was
20 not part of that plan, and I will certainly have a
21 conversation with Council Member Moya because we just
22 did vote on this at the last Stated Meeting, and this
23 is something that really should be put into place.
24 Thank you so much for your testimony.

2 JIM BROSI: Thank you very much for your
3 time.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I'd like now to call
5 on Adam Roberts from the Community Housing
6 Improvement Program.

7 You should be able to unmute yourself,
8 Mr. Roberts.

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

10 ADAM ROBERTS: Thank you for holding this
11 hearing today. I am Adam Roberts, Policy Director for
12 the Community Housing Improvement Program, also known
13 as CHIP. We represent New York's housing providers,
14 including apartment building owners and managers. We
15 are here to express our concern about the lack of
16 sufficient equipment for FDNY to fight fires in
17 apartment buildings. In particular, it appears as
18 though FDNY does not have the equipment necessary to
19 combat the sharp rise in e-bike fires. Currently,
20 when an illegal lithium battery is discovered in an
21 apartment building, FDNY requires building staff to
22 safely remove the battery. DEP then requires the
23 building owners to hire a third-party service to
24 dispose of the battery. Building staff lack the
25 equipment and expertise to handle the proper removal

1 of lithium batteries. Even if they were to have
2 better equipment and training, they lack the legal
3 right to access an occupied apartment. Likewise, we
4 have safety concerns about the City requiring that
5 the disposal of such deadly technology be outsourced.
6 The only explanation for such an illogical system of
7 dealing with e-bike fires is that the FDNY lacks the
8 necessary equipment to deal with them. We do not know
9 what equipment is needed, though we have heard of
10 many promising ideas. Nevertheless, it is clear that
11 a well-equipped FDNY is in a better position to
12 handle the removal and disposal of lithium batteries
13 than building staff and third-party disposal
14 companies. Furthermore, placing the onus on buildings
15 to deal with e-bike fires is a financial burden they
16 cannot afford, particularly for rent-stabilized
17 buildings. Net operating income, which is the amount
18 of income a unit produces before debt service, is
19 dropping dangerously fast throughout the city.
20 Therefore, owners cannot afford to bear the cleanup
21 costs and rising insurance rates that come from
22 dealing with e-bike fires. In the Bronx, net
23 operating income for pre-1974 rent-stabilized
24 buildings, which are those that do not receive 421-A
25

2 or any form of government subsidy, dropped nearly 20
3 percent in one year. FDNY has the training in dealing
4 with e-bike fires and the legal ability to access
5 occupied apartments with lithium batteries.
6 Therefore, we need the Council to ensure FDNY has the
7 necessary equipment to prevent these fires from
8 proliferating. Again, thank you for holding this
9 hearing today.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much for
11 your testimony.

12 Before we close out, I would just like to
13 recognize that we were joined by Council Member Jim
14 Gennaro via Zoom and Council Member Kevin Riley and
15 Oswald Feliz.

16 At this point if there are no questions,
17 then I will close this hearing. Thank you all who
18 testified.

19 I'd also like to thank Rachel Cordero,
20 our Supervising Attorney; Josh Kingsley, our Counsel
21 to this Committee; Will Hongach, our Senior Analyst;
22 and my amazing Chief-of-Staff, Miss Phyllis
23 Inzerillo, and to everyone who testified here today.
24 Thank you so much. [GAVEL]

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 May 9, 2024