

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT 1

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

----- X

March 14, 2025
Start: 10:07 a.m.
Recess: 2:30 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Joann Ariola,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Oswald Feliz
James F. Gennaro
Kristy Marmorato
Lincoln Restler
Kevin C. Riley
Lynn C. Schulman
Susan Zhuang

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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

Robert Tucker
Commissioner NYC FDNY

Mark Guerra
First Deputy Commissioner NYC FDNY

John Esposito
Chief of Department NYC FDNY

Kevin Woods
Chief of Fire Operations

Lizette Christoff

Michael Fields
Chief of EMS

Nafeesah Noonan
Associate Commissioner NYC FDNY

Zach Iscol
Commissioner of NYCEM

Christina Farrell
First Deputy Commissioner NYCEM

Christopher Blanco
Chief Financial Officer NYCEM

Sharon Brown
Self

Christopher Leon Johnson
Self

Sakeena Trice
NYLPI

Michael J Northmore
Self

Nancy Carbone
Friends of Firefighters

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT 3

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

Michael Tracey
UFOA

Joe Gorman
Friends of Fire Fighters, testifying in place of
Nancy Carbone

Tyler Weaver
Self

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Sound check for the Committee
3 on Fire and Emergency Management. Today's date is
4 March 14, 2025 being reported by Danny Wong in the
5 Council Chambers.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to
7 the New York City Council Preliminary Budget hearing
8 on Fire and Emergency Management. At this time, can
9 everybody please silence your cellphones? If you
10 wish to testify, please go to the back of the room to
11 fill out a testimony slip.

12 At this time and going forward, no one is to
13 approach the dais. I repeat, no one is to approach
14 the dais. Chair, we are ready to begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [GAVEL] Good morning and
16 welcome to Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Budget hearing for
17 the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management. My
18 name is Joann Ariola and I am the Chair of the Fire
19 and Emergency Management. Today, we will review the
20 Fire Department and New York City Emergency
21 Management's Fiscal 2026 budgets to understand how
22 they address the needs of all New Yorkers.

23 I would like to begin by thanking the members of
24 the Fire Department for their sacrifices over the
25 past year. The frontline responses of the EMT's,

2 paramedics, fire fighters are on display every day
3 because of their direct life saving actions, our city
4 is a safer place. The Fire Department's EMS and Fire
5 Fighters are known as New Yorks best and bravest and
6 I believe those nicknames are apply given. I would
7 also like to thank the members of the New York City
8 Emergency Management team. They have been working
9 incredibly long hours to assist in New York City's
10 response performing a job that they often did not get
11 enough credit for and a job that was not in your job
12 description to do.

13 The Fire Department's Fiscal 2026 Preliminary
14 Budget totals \$2.6 billion with funding for 17,177
15 positions. The departments fiscal 2026 budget has
16 undergone moderate changes in the preliminary
17 financial plan, increasing by \$6.94 million since
18 adoption. The plan includes four new needs for the
19 Department FDNY in Fiscal 2025 totaling \$104 million.
20 The Fire Departments Fiscal 2025 to 2029 capital
21 commitment grand total is \$1.1 billion with funding
22 for 332 distinct projects.

23 During our hearing today, the Committee would
24 like to discuss the Departments new needs in the
25 current fiscal plan. This includes the additional

2 \$72 million for personal service costs including
3 additional funding for overtime expenses and \$29
4 million in various OTPS adjustments. The Committee
5 would like to revisit these items and others such as
6 the recent Chalmer Settlement, EMS pay parity and the
7 Departments increasing reliance on overtime.

8 We would also like to our safety inspections,
9 increasing wait times for fire emergencies and the
10 ongoing lithium ion battery situation. Over the past
11 year, the Committee has held oversight hearings on a
12 wide range of topics including hearings on the city's
13 efforts to improve ambulance response times.

14 The Departments response and preparedness for
15 this flash flooding events and most recently a
16 hearing regarding the Departments response and to the
17 preparedness for wildfires. While these hearings
18 were not necessarily budget hearings, as we all know,
19 we often need to spend money to get results, and
20 that's exactly why we're here today to make sure
21 money is being spent on FDNI and Emergency Management
22 so that you can get the results that we need so that
23 our city can be safer.

24 I would like to thank our Committee Staff for
25 their hard work, Financial Analyst Tanveer Singh,

2 Unit Head Aliya Ali, Committee Counsel Josh Kingsley,
3 Political Analyst, Policy Analyst William Hongach,
4 and my Chief of Staff Phyllis Inzerillo. I would
5 like to welcome Commissioner Tucker. It is your
6 first Committee Hearing before this Committee and we
7 think that you're doing - I think that you're doing
8 an amazing job and you've brought a lot of positive
9 change to the Department in the short time that
10 you've been made the Commissioner and I look forward
11 to working with you closely in the future. I'd like
12 to thank our Fire Fighters, our EMTs, Paramedics, and
13 the Department Civilian staff for the work that they
14 do. I'm looking forward to hearing from the
15 Commissioner. The Committee Counsel will now swear
16 you in.

17 Before that, I just want to recognize that we've
18 been joined by is Cristi here? Council Member
19 Zhuang, Council Member Schulman and that's all thus
20 far. I turn to Committee Counsel so that you can be
21 sworn in. We're joined today by Commissioner Robert
22 Tucker, First Deputy Commissioner Mark Guerra, Deputy
23 Commissioner Lizette Christoff, Chief of the
24 Department John Esposito, Chief of Fire Operations
25

2 Kevin Woods, Chief of EMS Michael Fields, Associate
3 Commissioner Nafeesah Noonan.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much Chair. Can
5 you just raise your right hand just to confirm the
6 following: That you affirm to tell the truth, the
7 whole truth and nothing but the truth before this
8 Committee to answer honestly to Council Member
9 questions? Just recognize you do say that. Go
10 ahead, thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, we're just going to put
12 a hold on that for one moment because Chair Schulman,
13 CM Schulman is part of another budget hearing today,
14 so she would just like to make a statement so she can
15 get to the next budget hearing.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yes, thank you for the
17 accommodation Chair Ariola and I want to welcome
18 everybody from the Fire Department. Commissioner
19 Tucker, I want to echo the Chairs remarks about
20 everyone in the Fire Department, EMS. I am going to
21 ask - I know that there are representatives from the
22 Mayor's Office here but I'm going to ask in your
23 testimony and also with the questions that you be as
24 honest as possible with us about that resources that
25 you need. I know of some specifically in my district

2 that I'm going to try and help to fund and also I
3 used to work at the Emergency Medical Service on the
4 Administrative side and there needs to be some kind
5 of parity done for them because we want to make them
6 all one big family. So, with that, I apologize for
7 this but the budget meeting I am in is with the
8 speaker and so, I want to make sure that we're able
9 to get the resources we need for you guys, so thank
10 you very much. Thank you Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you CM Schulman.
12 Commissioner, you may proceed.

13 ROBERT TUCKER: Thank you very much Chair Ariola
14 and the members of the Fire and Emergency Management
15 Committee. I want to thank you for this opportunity
16 today to discuss the Preliminary Budget for New York
17 City Fire Department for Fiscal Year 2026. It is a
18 great honor to be in this Chair as the 35th New York
19 City Fire Commissioner.

20 2024 was a strong year for the Fire Department.
21 While the Fire Department faced increases in both
22 fire and emergency medical service calls, the FDNY's
23 dedication to fire prevention, education, and
24 outreach saved lives. Fire related fatalities
25 decreased by 25 percent compared to the prior year.

2 We also saw a significant reduction 67 percent of
3 deaths related to fires caused by lithium-ion
4 batteries. Even one death is too many, but through
5 the tireless work of EMS personnel and firefighters,
6 2024 was a safer year for New Yorkers.

7 We have been working with members of the Council
8 for the last few years on measures to reduce the harm
9 from fires caused by lithium-ion batteries. In 2023,
10 the city experienced 18 fatalities related to this
11 threat. I'm proud to report that in 2024, that
12 number fell to six. This positive outcome is the
13 result of numerous proactive steps that we took to
14 address this issue. This included frequent outreach
15 and safety messaging, aggressive inspections and
16 enforcement, and a targeted \$1 million advertising
17 campaign. We launched the FDNY Lithium-ion Battery
18 Task Force which inspected nearly 600 e-bike shops in
19 2024 alone. That's a 25 percent increase over the
20 inspections from 2023.

21 Members of the taskforce including our Fire
22 Prevention Inspectors and members of the Bureau of
23 Fire Investigations, our Fire Marshals issued 426
24 FDNY summonses, 138 violation orders, 32 criminal
25 summonses and in the most egregious cases worked with

2 our partners at the Department of Buildings to vacate
3 seven dangerous buildings.

4 We're still seeing a large number of fires caused
5 by lithium-ion batteries but our safety messaging is
6 getting through and we're seeing safer behavior from
7 New Yorkers who use these devices. More people are
8 charging and storing their devices outdoors when
9 possible. Yesterday, I declared 2025 Fire Prevention
10 Year in New York City to mark the 100th Anniversary
11 of National Fire Prevention Week.

12 In conjunction, I announced the release of
13 Community Risk Profiles for all 59 Community Boards
14 in the city, which provided detailed analysis of each
15 neighborhoods emergency preparedness and
16 vulnerability to fire incidents. Over the course of
17 the year, we will focus on the top 100 most fire
18 prone blocks of the city, providing personalized fire
19 safety education to residents on those blocks,
20 including door to door outreach, community events,
21 and awareness campaign. This is a team effort though
22 and I know that our partners here at the Council will
23 help us fight these challenges together. We will do
24 everything possible to help keep communities safe.

2 Many of the Council Members here today have
3 hosted FDNY fire safety presentations in your
4 districts. Fire and Life Safety Outreach was a top
5 priority for the Fire Department in 2024, and it will
6 continue to be in 2025. The Fire Safety Education
7 unit is comprised of active duty members who are
8 specially trained to conduct community outreach and
9 educate the public with critical life saving
10 strategies. They focus on fire prevention and
11 perform a variety of targeted presentations tailored
12 to the audience of each respective presentation.

13 In 2024, the Fire Safety Education Team conducted
14 roughly 3,200 presentations for more than half a
15 million New Yorkers. This represented a 37 percent
16 increase over the previous year. We also have a
17 variety of active mobile cardiopulmonary
18 resuscitation units. In this unit, FDNY EMTs and
19 paramedics teach New Yorkers from every corner of the
20 city to perform compressions only CPR. We have heard
21 numerous stories about members of the public training
22 in CPR in one of our programs and then successfully
23 using the skills that they've learned to save a life
24 in their own communities.

2 One example that we like to cite took place in
3 2023 when two students from the FDNY high school in
4 Brooklyn encountered a friends family member who was
5 unresponsive and gasping for air. Putting their CPR
6 training into use, the students worked together to
7 perform chest compressions, contact 911 and keep the
8 patient alive while EMS responded and transported the
9 patient to the hospital. These efforts, which are
10 carried out in partnership with the FDNY Foundation
11 assist New Yorkers while helping themselves and their
12 neighbors. You never know when you might be put in a
13 situation to save a life. And I would encourage
14 everyone to participate in a mobile CPR program. I
15 invite you to contact us to schedule fire safety and
16 CPR events as well as to schedule fire and EMS
17 recruiting demonstrations for members of your
18 committee. We are always looking for New Yorkers to
19 join the FDNY and we need your help.

20 We had successes in the area of Recruiting and
21 Retention in 2024. The Fire Fighter Recruitment
22 Campaign which wrapped up last fall resulted in
23 approximately 34,000 individuals filing to take the
24 fire fighter exam. The data driven targeted
25 campaign, which we called All Heros Welcome, was a

2 comprehensive outreach program to reach potential
3 fire fighter candidates from every area of New York
4 City. We advertised in ten languages, using online
5 and social media resources, traditional media such as
6 radio and key community newspapers, as well as an
7 aggressive advertising push on the transit system
8 throughout the city. Of course, our most valuable
9 recruitment asset was our own members and for the
10 Fire Fighter Campaign, we had an impressive group of
11 active duty fire fighters who spoke at schools,
12 houses of worship, community meetings, career fairs,
13 colleges and block parties. I want to thank the
14 Council for partnering with us on this important
15 campaign. A number of Council Members held events in
16 their districts or helped us promote events that we
17 were hosting. I'm encouraged by the fact that eight
18 percent of the filers were women. Recruiting for
19 civil service exams is a process and we know from
20 previous cycles how important it is to keep our
21 candidates interested and prepared, from taking the
22 written exam to completing necessary physical testing
23 and being sure that they enter the academy in shape
24 and ready to train. We use a variety of tools to
25 engage candidates, including mobile academies, online

2 and in person information sessions, tutorials,
3 workout sessions, outreach from mentors and fraternal
4 organizations and persistent communication to
5 continue pushing them from one step of the process to
6 the next.

7 We also had a very strong cycle for Emergency
8 Medical Technicians. We had our sights on a goal of
9 3,000 potential candidates and ultimately we have
10 signed up 3,500. A majority of those test takers
11 signed up to enter the FDNY EMS Trainee Program.
12 These candidates will go through 16 weeks of paid
13 training at the EMS academy and become New York State
14 certified EMTs. At a time when the entire country is
15 facing difficulties in recruiting for EMS, we are
16 literally creating our own new EMTs.

17 Another positive development for the department
18 was the recent promotion of Deputy Chief Michele
19 Fitzsimmons. After beginning her career with the
20 Department in 2001, Deputy Chief Fitzsimmons is now
21 the highest-ranking female fire officer in FDNY
22 history. Her promotion shatters the glass ceiling
23 for women everywhere and it is an important reminder
24 that promotional opportunities in the FDNY know no
25 limits. She is a model for women and girls

2 everywhere who will look to the path that she created
3 to see themselves rising through the ranks of the
4 FDNY.

5 A new challenge that we face this fall was the
6 great proliferation of brush fires. Fighting brush
7 fires is not new or unusual to the FDNY but in late
8 2024, a prolonged drought and persistent dry
9 conditions led to drastic increases over a short
10 period of time. To give you a sense of that
11 increase, we had roughly 120 brush fires in October
12 and November of 2023. The number more than
13 quadrupled to over 500 fires over the same period of
14 time in 2024. We were proactive in our efforts to
15 combat this surge. Launching the Departments first
16 ever brush fire taskforce. We used innovative
17 approaches to keep the city safe, deploying drone
18 teams to assist fire operations at active fires as
19 well as in a preventive capacity. Scouting areas of
20 potential fires to ensure efficient responses is
21 important and we're doing that.

22 We were fortunate that these fires didn't cost
23 lives of any New Yorkers and were mostly contained to
24 isolated areas and did not cause widespread damage to
25 buildings or homes. We continue to learn from our

2 experience here and from the experience of our
3 counterparts in Los Angeles and other parts of the
4 country. As with any challenge, the FDNY faces, I
5 have every confidence that our members will learn and
6 improve and continue to keep New York City safe.
7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you Commissioner and
9 I'd just like to say that I really commend you for
10 your on the ground approach for the Fire Department
11 and in how we call it, leading from the front. You
12 are on the ground, in fire houses, talking with fire
13 fighters, talking with EMS workers, meeting with
14 leadership and I think that that's the way to go and
15 it's refreshing because I don't think we've had this
16 in the past but now that you've had the position for
17 over six months, what are your primary objectives for
18 the department for your first year?

19 ROBERT TUCKER: I think that we're meeting
20 several of the primary objectives. The first
21 objective obviously is to keep our members safe and
22 to keep New York City residents safe and we are
23 working hard to do that in many ways. I also wanted
24 to take a CEOs look at the FDNY coming from the
25 business community for 25 years and we have done a

2 very, very thorough look at the FDNY from A to Z and
3 we've identified areas that are working really well
4 and we've identified areas that need more attention
5 and we're giving that attention where required. So,
6 I think we're on a good track thus far. It's 214
7 days into it and I feel like we've established a very
8 solid team, many of whom are here today and I thank
9 them for their support.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I would agree, 100 percent
11 retention is key. So, you had mentioned the testing
12 that's coming up for both EMTs and fire fighters.
13 So, what is the expected timeline for the upcoming
14 fire fighter EMS academies and will there be any
15 delays because of fiscal constraints?

16 ROBERT TUCKER: We don't anticipate any delays
17 but I'm going to ask Commissioner Noonan to give you
18 the stats on that, Nafeesah.

19 NAFEESAH NOONAN: Can you hear me now? Thank
20 you. We don't anticipate any delays. We, for EMS
21 specifically, we plan to hold three EMS training
22 classes as well as three fire classes for Fiscal Year
23 2026. We are on track to fill those classes. We
24 have been focusing on making sure that we are ramping
25 up on our recruitment efforts for EMS because we know

2 that that has been a challenge in the past and as the
3 Commissioner mentioned, we did pretty well this past
4 winter, of this current winter on our numbers and we
5 are working on focusing on reducing attrition there,
6 right? So not letting much time lag there and making
7 sure that we are reviewing people, getting them to
8 pass their physical exams and into the hiring
9 process. So, we have a class coming up this spring
10 and then another class this fall that we feel
11 confident that we'll be able to fill fully.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah, I've definitely
13 noticed even on social media that there has been a
14 real push for recruitment and notification of tests
15 coming up and preparation classes that are being
16 given. I see that all over social media and kudos to
17 you again, it's something that we haven't seen in the
18 past. I know that you had said that uhm, was it
19 Heros for All? Is that what it was called?

20 NAFEEESAH NOONAN: All Heros Welcome.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: All Heros Welcome. So I
22 think that that really speaks to the diversity issue
23 that has always come up when it comes to the Fire
24 Department. So, Heros for All and being that
25 everyone is welcome to take the test, to pass the

2 test, to become a fire fighter, to become an
3 emergency medical technician, to become a paramedic
4 and you said eight percent of the filers were women.
5 Can you give me percentages on other demographics?

6 NAFEESAH NOONAN: Sure, in terms of filers, we
7 saw 4 percent Asian, 25 percent Black and 27 percent
8 Hispanic. We saw about 35 percent of our filers were
9 White. We are now in the process of administering
10 the exam, so we will see where those numbers land at
11 the end of the examination period.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And you also - I was going
13 to ask about mentorship programs but you spoke to
14 that in your testimony. So, my next question is does
15 the Department employ any part-time or per diem EMTs?
16 If not, how can that help in the staffing issues in
17 the EMS currently?

18 ROBERT TUCKER: At the present time, no we don't
19 employ any per diem EMTs. As I said, we are really
20 reviewing the emergency medical service from all
21 angles and all options are on the table to make
22 certain that we can provide the best prehospital care
23 to the people of the City of New York, and so, we are
24 thinking in the box, we're thinking out of the box
25 and we're working with the support of the Mayor and

2 City Hall to be as creative as possible to make sure
3 that New Yorkers, when they call 911 get the
4 prehospital care they need.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Now, I think that your CEO
6 approach to this is very unique and I think that it
7 works. It worked for Bloomberg when he was first
8 elected and continuing the good work that then his
9 predecessor had done and taking the CEO approaches is
10 really I think that will work.

11 So, I know I couldn't do anything without my
12 staff. The staff is tantamount to what I can get
13 done and I always say, I make the promises and they
14 make it's kept. So, how has the reduction of
15 civilian headcount in the department effected the
16 department?

17 ROBERT TUCKER: First of all on the critical
18 emergency services that we provide to the New
19 Yorkers, there is no impact. We are always going to
20 staff our fire engines with the minimum manning
21 required and there's no doubt that that will happen
22 365 days a year so be assured that public safety is
23 not in jeopardy.

24 On headcount generally where we are down, what I
25 could say is that you know particularly in our Bureau

2 of Fire Prevention, we are sometimes slower at
3 getting the job done but we get the job done never
4 the less. I would like to get - you know I am
5 working very closely with the budget director and the
6 city has authorized a new set of promotions on the
7 uniform side that's coming in April for Lieutenant
8 and Captains and Fire Marshals, which we're grateful
9 for. The sooner we normalize the - rightsize the
10 headcount, the more quickly overtime will come down
11 and you know certain other efficiencies will be
12 accomplished.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. End to end
14 response times for life threatening. This is about
15 emergency medical responses increased from 10 minutes
16 and 37 seconds to 11 minutes and 21 seconds in the
17 first four months of 2025, FY25. What do you think
18 the key factors are to contributing to this delay and
19 what steps are being taken to improve response
20 delays?

21 ROBERT TUCKER: Yeah, again you know I'm almost
22 manically focused on EMS and response times is
23 certainly a critical part of my focus. What I would
24 say is that there's no one thing that's going fix the
25 response time issue. Response times are up for a lot

2 of reasons and Chief Fields and his staff are working
3 tirelessly again to be creative about ways we can get
4 ambulances on the street. We have several new
5 programs running right now that I'd like to
6 highlight. One is that I now have an EMS officer in
7 certain problematic emergency rooms because where
8 we're seeing significant delays is when our EMT's and
9 paramedics bring patients to emergency departments.
10 We're waiting more than 40, 45 minutes just to
11 deliver the patient. If we can bring that time down
12 by having an EMS officer in the emergency department
13 to help move things along, the ambulance will get
14 back on the street in an available capacity sooner.

15 Another thing that we're trying, I think, is
16 working rather successfully is our paramedic response
17 units. Those are non-transport units that are
18 getting critical lifesaving paramedic level medicine
19 to our most acutely sick people in New York and once
20 they provide that service, they don't take part in
21 the transportation and so they move on to the next
22 call. We're going to need to find some balance and
23 I'm working very hard on it, on who we bring to the
24 hospital and who are able to divert away from that
25 and our paramedic response units are really helping

2 move things along faster scene to scene to scene.

3 Finally, we very recently changed a long standing

4 policy around the ten minute rule we call it. Where

5 patients were essentially using our ambulances like

6 taxi cabs and saying, I want to go to this hospital.

7 Today, we are only going to bring patients in most

8 instances to the closest hospital. That's going to

9 change response times because that too will take a 20

10 minutes ride or a 30 minute ride to a hospital of

11 your choice, turn it into a 10 minute ride and I'll

12 get those 20 minutes back.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah, I would agree, coming

14 from a hospital network that had a very busy ER and a

15 trauma center and is backed up constantly, I could

16 see how and I you know physically witnessed that your

17 EMT drivers were there just waiting around for their

18 patient to be triaged and then told that they were

19 going to be admitted or whatever and they then left.

20 So, I think that that's very, very positive. Are

21 there any other out of the box ideas that the Fire

22 Department can use to keep ambulances in service,

23 instead of being you know taken out of service? Like

24 we had just at our last hearing, a father testified

25 that his son died of a cardiac arrest from an asthma

2 attack and there were so many ambulances so close but
3 they were out of service because they were out of
4 fire. So, how do we prevent that from happening in
5 the future?

6 ROBERT TUCKER: We certainly - I certainly know
7 that story and am heartbroken by the outcome there.
8 As you said, I am a hands on Commissioner. We had a
9 seizure at a 5th alarm fire unrelated to the fire
10 yesterday in the Bronx but on a contiguous block. We
11 were able to move units that were assigned to the
12 fire to the seizure and that went very effectively.
13 The Mayor and his staff have given the Fire
14 Department the green light to proceed to build a new
15 EMS computer assisted dispatching platform. The one
16 that we're currently using is at the end of life and
17 has been for a while. We're going to build that
18 right on top of the Fire CAD system that we built
19 internally. I think the more we can get our fire
20 apparatus, of which 50 percent of the runs that our
21 engine companies are going on citywide are now
22 medical. If the more we could get are engines
23 talking to our ambulances and unify the dispatching
24 of those two systems which we're going to start to
25 build ourselves, the more creative we can be and then

2 if we bring in AI and we bring in some of the tech
3 that's available to us through outside partners like
4 Oracle and Google and Microsoft just to name a few, I
5 think we're going to get to the point and time where
6 we're going to understand based on a data driven
7 approach where calls potentially are going to come
8 from before we get them and we're going to be able to
9 triage them in piece act one and piece act two,
10 better and more efficiently than we're currently
11 doing that.

12 I think the technology exists today to dispatch
13 our ambulances and our fire trucks more efficiently
14 and I have from the day I walked into FDNY seven
15 months ago or so, been extremely focused on tech and
16 tech solutions to bring efficiencies to the fire
17 department that don't currently exist.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Alright and that would
19 really and truly help EMS units when they have to
20 especially during peak hours, have to get and high
21 demand hours to get from one place to another and I
22 think that it is time that - well the CAD system we
23 know has been failing. I give you credit, a lot of
24 credit for realizing that and working hard to build
25 your own system knowing what the fire department

2 needs and I'm sure it will come at a much lesser cost
3 than the CAD system and that's what we're all about.
4 You know working smarter, not harder and we will uhm,
5 I think that's a great idea and people are afraid of
6 AI and they're afraid of any type of tech but there
7 are good ways to use these tools and that's how we
8 have to use them. We have to use them in the right
9 way to make this city better. I'd like to note
10 before we go on that we've been joined Council Member
11 Riley and Council Member Marmorato. I will now yield
12 to Council Member Zhuang who has a question.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you. Thank you
14 Chair. I have a brainstorm question. I had - if you
15 put squatter house fire, three words in Google, I
16 have a house in my district that had a fire six times
17 in past three years. The house had a fire because
18 they have squatter live there and I really appreciate
19 FDNY really go to help the people and I heard they
20 had a couple of people get injured in the job also.
21 I really appreciate your work but are we able to do
22 something to prevent those house that have squatters
23 live there before the fire happens? It's happened
24 six times already and the last time there was a big
25 fire, a woman lost a life there and the fire went to

2 next door neighbor. Now, six families become - they
3 don't have a home anymore. So, are we able to do
4 something to prevent this type of instance happening?

5 ROBERT TUCKER: Yeah, thank you very much for
6 your question and obviously that's a concern. I'm
7 going to ask our Chief of Department John Esposito to
8 give you a more specific answer but I want you to
9 know that we have a very robust fire prevention
10 division and the team led by Chief Tom Currao, who is
11 here this morning are out in the community. I talked
12 about some of the statistics but they are out doing
13 fire prevention in commercial buildings, in
14 residential buildings, in store fronts on lithium-ion
15 battery enforcement. The members of the fire
16 prevention team at FDNY including our amazing fire
17 prevention inspectors are doing a fabulous job but on
18 your specific question, I'd like Chief Esposito to
19 address it.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you.

21 JOHN ESPOSITO: Good morning. So, those type of
22 buildings where we have squatters, we generally
23 consider them to be vacant buildings although there
24 are people living in them. That tells us that
25 they're usually not kept up in good condition and

2 when there is a fire there, it's extremely dangerous
3 for our fire fighters. When we identify that type of
4 building, we would notify the Department of Buildings
5 to have the building sealed and then you know keep up
6 and follow through to make sure that the building is
7 sealed so that nobody can get inside of that. That
8 building, that's down in Brooklyn correct?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Yes.

10 JOHN ESPOSITO: So, we've had significant fires
11 there and the most recent fire that was a fatality
12 there as well.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Yes, yes.

14 JOHN ESPOSITO: So, you know we can keep up and
15 identify the buildings but it does seem to be a
16 problem.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Is that anyway - this is
18 just brainstorm. Anyway you guys can patrol the area
19 or NYPD can patrol that area more?

20 JOHN ESPOSITO: We're not always able to patrol.
21 If we do become aware of it, as we are with this one,
22 we can notify Department of Buildings that it's
23 sealed.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Okay, even if it's
25 sealed, people still break in.

2 JOHN ESPOSITO: Yeah, I mean, I can if you -
3 after the hearing give me the address, I'll work with
4 Commissioner Tisch and her team to provide some
5 additional patrol over there. You know the fire
6 department is not a - in the patrol business but we
7 partner with the NYPD every single day and work very,
8 I work very closely with the police commissioner and
9 her staff and speak to them regularly and I'm happy
10 to work with her and her team. They're doing a great
11 job and we want together on this.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Great, thank you so much.
13 Thank you all for doing great work. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Next, we'll hear from
15 Council Member Marmorato and then Riley.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Hi, good morning.

17 JOHN ESPOSITO: Hi.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: First, I'd like to
19 thank you all for your service. I come from a family
20 of Fire Fighters. My dad was chief in the 3rd
21 battalion. He retired about 2004, 2005, so I
22 appreciate all the work you do and God Bless your
23 families for giving you guys to us here in the city
24 to protect us. Thank you.

2 I just have a couple questions. I've been told
3 that the Bronx is the only borough without a
4 dedicated hazmat engine. Why is that and how can
5 this be rectified and who currently responds to these
6 type of natural disasters?

7 JOHN ESPOSITO: So, thank you for that question.
8 So, yes, currently right now, we have five engine
9 companies spread throughout the city that are
10 considered hazmat technician units. In addition, we
11 have eight squad companies, including two in the
12 Bronx that are hazmat technician units. So,
13 currently those squad companies would perform the
14 hazmat technician duties along with hazmat Company
15 One which comes out of Queens and covers the whole
16 city. With that said, we are proposing that engine
17 company 67 will be designated a hazmat technician
18 unit and they will be tasked with covering the entire
19 Bronx so that each borough will have a hazmat
20 technician engine dedicated to covering that borough.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Where is 67 located?

22 JOHN ESPOSITO: 67 engine is located in the 7th
23 division, which is in Manhattan but they're very
24 quickly across the river into the Bronx and they
25 would be tasked with covering the Bronx.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, thank you. Now
3 let's talk about the auxiliary radio communications.
4 I've seen reports that there's interference in high
5 rise buildings and fire fighters are unable to
6 communicate. Now this really upsets me because I
7 remember during 911 that my father was telling me
8 that they had the same issues. I think it was 18
9 truck by Delancy that they knew something was wrong
10 and I think the lieutenant at the time, he told me a
11 story that because there was no communication, he
12 decided to make that decision to get his guys out and
13 you know it did end up saving their lives. Why is
14 this still happening and how can we make it better?

15 JOHN ESPOSITO: So, after 911 and you're
16 absolutely correct. On September 11, 2001, we were
17 severely handicapped with our communications ability
18 in the World Trade Center. Since that, our
19 communications have greatly improved.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay.

21 JOHN ESPOSITO: Including the Auxiliary Radio
22 Communications System, which is in the fire code that
23 high rise buildings need to install this in their
24 buildings. What we have learned as the years have
25 gone on is that we have better ways to improve our

2 communications. So, the Fire Department is proposing
3 ARCS 2.0 which will eliminate that interference that
4 occasionally occurs. The interference occurs when a
5 system in one building is turned on and we're trying
6 to operate another building. It is possible for it
7 to happen. It has not hampered our efforts fighting
8 fire but to avoid that, we have a subsequent - we
9 have other plans that will require code revision that
10 will make it easier for the fire department and
11 easier for the building owners and still yield the
12 result that we want, which is great communications in
13 high rise buildings and large area buildings.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Yeah, we can't have
15 any mistakes going forward. We got to protect you
16 guys. Now, we know that the NYPD has a lack of cars
17 for patrol and staff officers to use them. Does the
18 FDNY also have that problem?

19 ROBERT TUCKER: You know we have a big fleet no
20 doubt. We certainly, there are areas where we could
21 use more cars absolutely in EMS in particular. Uhm,
22 the demands on our fleet are high. We do have over
23 200 mechanics but nevertheless, riding around 24/7 in
24 this city creates a lot of wear and tear on our
25 fleet.

2 And so we could always while we have a pipeline
3 that exists currently of apparatus that we buy and
4 the city has a schedule you know they've provided us
5 of when and how we purchase firefighting apparatus,
6 other aspects of our fleet. We could always use
7 more.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: And what is like the
9 life expectancy for like a truck or a ladder and kind
10 of like a ballpark number for like a cost?

11 ROBERT TUCKER: Uhm Commissioner Christoff has
12 those numbers and she's going to give them to you
13 with the average age of our engines, our pumpers, our
14 ladder companies. We have several different ladder
15 companies; some you know rear tiller - Commissioner
16 Christoff will give you all that.

17 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: Sure so for fire apparatus,
18 the life cycle for those is actually part of the UFOA
19 contract. So, we replace the vehicles used by engine
20 companies, pumpers before they turn 12 years old and
21 we replace ladders before they turn 11 years old.
22 Right now, the average age of our pumpers is a little
23 less than six and a half years. We have a couple
24 different kinds of ladders, as the Commissioner was
25 referring to. So, our 75 foot tower ladders, average

2 age is about six and a half years. 95 foot ladders,
3 a little over nine years. For TDA's, it's a little
4 over ten years and for rear mount ladders, a little
5 over eight years.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay so when it comes
7 to their life expectancy or end of life, will you
8 have the money saved up to purchase new and when you
9 do purchase new, do you purchase like a whole fleet?

10 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: We do purchase sizable
11 quantities at a time. So, right now, we actually
12 have 200 plus pieces of fire apparatus on order.
13 Unfortunately, we saw post COVID that a lot of the
14 timeframes for getting those vehicles back from the
15 manufacturers have increased substantially. So,
16 right now we do have some vehicles that are over age
17 from what our mandated replacement cycles are. Not
18 because we didn't have the funding to put in the
19 orders. We have been putting in the orders on time
20 but because the timeframe from when we put in the
21 order to when we receive the vehicle has lengthened
22 considerably.

23 So, we're actually accelerating. We have been
24 accelerating those orders, so that we're putting in

2 the orders earlier, so that we're more likely to get
3 the vehicles on time.

4 ROBERT TUCKER: I think it's important also to
5 add that while we have a real schedule vis-a-vis the
6 apparatus. The more the city budgets to increase our
7 headcount, for example in the Bureau of Fire
8 Prevention, the more cars we need to increase to get
9 those people out in the field doing the inspections.
10 And so, what I'm not seeing is a direct correlation
11 on that and I'm trying to work very productively with
12 the budget director on fleet and fleet size because
13 we are sometimes hampered. The work gets done, it
14 just gets done slower because for example, we don't
15 have cars to give our fire inspectors to go out into
16 the field. So, they use public transportation. When
17 they do that, it happens, it just happens slower.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Where is the biggest
19 budget deficit?

20 ROBERT TUCKER: Around fleet?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Hmm, hmm.

22 ROBERT TUCKER: It's not you know I think the
23 city has focused very intensively on engine and
24 ladder company apparatus. I think response cars,
25 first line supervisor cars, chiefs cars for example,

2 but we're in - you know we're really pushing hard.
3 We've got good coms going with the Deputy Mayor's
4 Office for Public Safety on this and with the budget
5 director and I believe there will be some progress on
6 that.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: I think my brother
8 used to drive the Chief Officer around and if they
9 drove anything like him, their life expectancy is not
10 going to be very long at all.

11 ROBERT TUCKER: As I said, there's a lot of wear
12 and tear on our vehicles. Some of the response
13 vehicles that our Chiefs are in are at the end of
14 life and you know really from a - we want those cars
15 to be new and in tip top shape because again, talking
16 about correlating, our vehicle maintenance costs go
17 down if the cars are newer. It's when the cars have
18 you know 150,000 miles on them and you need to
19 replace a transmission. That becomes less cost
20 effective.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Yeah, absolutely I
22 could totally see that. Now, do you find that there
23 is enough funding allocated to mandates for fire
24 apparatus replacements? Is it kind of -

2 ROBERT TUCKER: Yeah, as Commissioner Christoff
3 mentioned, fire apparatus and the purchase of that is
4 mandated in our fire fighters contract, I'm sorry
5 fire officers contract and uhm there was a really
6 terrific article in the New York Times recently about
7 fire apparatus and sort of the business of building
8 fire trucks all over the country and I think that you
9 know New York is doing than the national average but
10 nevertheless there is a shortage of fire, of new
11 apparatus and we have the orders in so there's no
12 complaint from FDNY on purchasing fire trucks going
13 forward. As Commissioner Christoff said, we have
14 over 200 pieces of apparatus currently on order.
15 What our complaint is that the companies that we've
16 order it from aren't getting it to us fast enough but
17 that as the New York Times highlighted is a national
18 problem.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, so I think that
20 - so what is an emergency crew truck? Because I know
21 that our officers reached out to and I think every
22 single borough is going to have one, is that correct?

23 ROBERT TUCKER: That sounds great so we'll take
24 them.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: No, I can only afford
3 my borough at least try to find funding for my
4 borough but what does the emergency crew truck do?

5 ROBERT TUCKER: Maybe our fleet maintenance.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay.

7 ROBERT TUCKER: Yeah, yeah, so our fleet
8 maintenance crews are doing really commendable work.
9 There is a lot of work as I said fleet maintenance is
10 a big, big part of what we do. I actually was at the
11 5th alarm in the Bronx yesterday. We send a large
12 contingent of auto mechanics and fleet maintenance of
13 people to multiple alarm fires because they're you
14 know in the freezing cold apparatus you know can
15 break at the scene and we need them there. We need
16 vehicles to get them there and we need vehicles that
17 can bring with it certain parts and equipment to fix
18 right at the scene those vehicles, our firefighting
19 apparatus. And so, what I think you're talking about
20 is those types of vehicles.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, alright, Chair,
22 can I just have two more questions?

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Absolutely.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. What can my
25 office as City Council provide funding for your

1 officers? I know that we try to help with structural
2 at the fire houses. We try to help with the upgrades
3 but are there anything that we can use our
4 discretionary funding to assist with the fire
5 officers? I don't know if it's like, if we're
6 allowed to do like I know you guys have washer and
7 dryers that break very easily. Like is there
8 anything that you could think of off the top of your
9 head that we can help fund?

11 ROBERT TUCKER: Sure, what I would say first of
12 all is thank you. The entire Council has been
13 incredibly generous. We will ask you for help now.
14 We - we - there are things that the Council can help
15 with. They're not large you know major projects but
16 Council Member Schulman called me the other day and
17 asked me if she could replace the door of a fire
18 house in her district. That's incredibly generous
19 and we appreciate that and even though it doesn't -
20 you know when we're talking about an almost \$3
21 billion budget you know that's a couple of hundred
22 thousand dollars. It's needle moving to me and I'm
23 deeply grateful that you would ask. We have
24 projects. We were in Queens the other day with the
25 Borough President. The Chair was there, so was

2 Council Member Schulman. I made a presentation and
3 left with \$3.5 million of the Borough Presidents
4 generosity to buy 15 response vehicles for Queens
5 County. If I knew I could go to any borough, which I
6 go to regularly anyway and come home with a duffle
7 bag full of money like that for projects that are
8 really lifesaving, I would be there. So, can I came
9 back to you with some individual projects and perhaps
10 - great, so in addition to - so thank you Jason and
11 thank you for all of your work that you're doing for
12 us. So, we asked you for the crew truck but we also
13 asked you for a command car for EMS.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Yup.

15 ROBERT TUCKER: And believe it or not, command
16 cars in EMS, that's like our lieutenants are in those
17 and that's the first line supervisor. They're
18 paramedics. That's really, really important and I
19 have found that we are very short on command cars.
20 Not because we don't have them but because they're
21 broken. And so, that lieutenant who we expect to be
22 out in the field supervising EMT's and paramedics
23 then ends up staying in quarters. That's not the
24 best use of her or his time, and so, if you give us
25 one, I promise you it will be in your district.

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT 42

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay definitely. We
3 actually through our Metro North rezoning, we were
4 able to secure \$1.5 million for engine 72 for the
5 façade and the roof. So, hopefully - the money is
6 there, so just start working on the city and being a
7 pain in the neck to try to make sure that they follow
8 through with this.

9 ROBERT TUCKER: My specialty, thank you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: One last curve ball.
11 Did you ever name the robot dog? The last one?

12 ROBERT TUCKER: We'll get back to you on that.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: My suggestion is
14 Chief.

15 ROBERT TUCKER: Oh, I like it, okay when we come
16 see you with the requests we'll figure out and
17 update.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Of course, absolutely.

19 ROBERT TUCKER: Okay, sounds great, thank you.
20 Thank you for your questions and thanks to your dad.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thanks Chair.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I suggest name him Rocky
23 after my Boston terrier but Council Member Riley.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you Chair. Good
25 morning Commissioner and good morning to your team.

1 ROBERT TUCKER: Good morning.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: I kind of want to
3 piggyback off my colleague Council Member Marmorato
4 with speaking about technology. How is technology
5 being integrated into the fire house upgrades to
6 improve response time and fire fighter safety?
7

8 ROBERT TUCKER: So, uhm I said it already. I'll
9 say it again. I think that technology is really the
10 key to lots of unsolved puzzles within the FDNY and
11 I'm extremely focused on not only reviewing,
12 understanding and operationalizing the existing
13 technology within the Department, which would tell
14 you is impressive but I would also say that there's a
15 lot of work that needs to be done and I am spending a
16 lot of time working internally with our folks in the
17 Borough of Technology Services but also meeting with
18 outside vendors and other fire departments and public
19 safety agencies to see what they're doing that we can
20 learn from. We don't have to invent the wheel. We
21 sometimes can just look to our neighbors and other
22 partners. I sent a delegation of chief officers
23 including the Chief of Department out to California
24 to meet with the Chief of the LA County Fire
25 Department during at the very end of their horrific

2 brush fires and wild land fires that they suffered
3 through to see what technology they were deploying.
4 We are using drones and robots. We are you know have
5 computer dispatching. We have fiber going into every
6 fire house now, so we've upped the speed with which
7 we can communicate and every second counts and fiber
8 is making it faster to get messaging from our 911
9 ACTs to the firehouses. But I'm not done yet. There
10 have got to be things that we could do to make it
11 better, make it faster. You know we are open to
12 reviewing and understanding technology. We're not
13 afraid of it. We are embracing things like AI and
14 the future of how AI will impact the FDNY and I think
15 it will impact us.

16 We're talking about things like encryption in our
17 radios. So, we're really at the cutting edge but we
18 want to even get better and the Deputy Mayor's Office
19 of Public Safety hosts a technology committee meeting
20 where the Chief Tech Officer is from various agencies
21 that fall under the Deputy Mayor meet regularly to
22 discuss what's going on in their agency. So, I think
23 we've got some learning happening internally. We
24 learned from our sister agencies within the Adam's
25 Administration and I think we're spending a lot of

2 time because of my experience in the last 25 years
3 before I came to the fire department meeting with
4 partners from the biggest tech companies in the
5 world.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you Commissioner.
7 How is the department improving living in working
8 conditions in fire houses, particularly in high
9 demand areas within this budget?

10 ROBERT TUCKER: Yeah the average age of our fire
11 houses is about 100 years. That's both a beautiful
12 thing and a challenge. We have several ongoing
13 projects to upgrade the physical space of our fire
14 houses, which include gender neutral and
15 accommodations and accommodations for female
16 firefighters. That population is growing and I'm
17 very proud of that but we need to accommodate for
18 that. We are somewhat victims of our own real estate
19 because these beautiful old firehouses are exactly
20 that. We have about 25 or so firehouses, maybe just
21 a little less, firehouses that have a repair need.
22 We have many, many more firehouses with smaller
23 repair needs. We have lots of projects going on
24 right now to upgrade firehouses.

2 Getting back to the Chair excuse me about a
3 project in Far Rockaway, we are going to hopefully
4 get a shovel in the ground on that firehouse in
5 August. You probably know but it's worth repeating,
6 those projects aren't done by the FDNY. They're done
7 in consultation but we're not ultimately responsible
8 for building new fire houses. I'd like to have more
9 responsibility over repairing our firehouses and not
10 going outside to that. We have people internally in
11 the fire department who are capable of that. That's
12 an area where we might benefit from increased
13 headcount because of the cost. We might see
14 decreased costs on that but you know again, I've been
15 very transparent with the budget director. He's been
16 very, very open and willing to discuss things like
17 that with me where the curves connect and I've gotten
18 a lot of cooperation from OMB on seeing it a little
19 bit differently than how we've been doing it in the
20 past.

21 But for the project in Far Rockaway, that's going
22 to be built by a third party, not by us but fire
23 houses are the older they get, the more repair they
24 could use.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you Commissioner.

3 Just three more quick questions. The first one with
4 fire houses, if you don't have the answer today
5 that's fine if you could just get back to me. If you
6 could provide an assessment of the current conditions
7 of the fire housing in District 12 in my Council
8 District. I want to be very supportive and helpful
9 regarding the budget to see if I can help those fire
10 houses out, so that's not really a question. It's
11 just -

12 ROBERT TUCKER: Thank you very much for that
13 offer and we'll - I got pens on both sides.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: I see it. I see it
15 working.

16 ROBERT TUCKER: Thank you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Next question. I wanted
18 to talk about diversity within the fire department.
19 Do you have any data on the demographics with
20 diversity in the fire department right now?

21 ROBERT TUCKER: Yes. So, that you know the fire
22 department is under a consent decree operating with
23 the federal monitor and it's extremely important to
24 me that we are more than compliant in that area. I
25 am pleased to say that in the 214 days that I've been

2 the fire commissioner, I think we, the department has
3 made very significant progress, not just under me and
4 not just under my predecessor and her predecessors
5 but there is progress and there is still work to be
6 done. Nafeesah, do you want to give the numbers,
7 please?

8 NAFEESAH NOONAN: Sure if you're speaking overall
9 or were you specifically looking for titles?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Overall.

11 NAFEESAH NOONAN: Okay, uhm if we're speaking
12 about overall, we have about our White male
13 population is about 54 percent. We are seeing about
14 a total of three percent women and this is overall
15 fire, EMS and civilian. Our Hispanic population is
16 about 18 percent. Our Black population is about 12
17 percent overall, and uhm our Asian population is a
18 little over 4 percent.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. And definitely
20 Commissioner, I appreciate the work that you and your
21 predecessors have been doing. Numbers are
22 increasing, not rapidly as we would like them to
23 increase but would love to continue partnering with
24 you to see if we could do some outreach within our
25 communities, working with our high schools maybe to

2 let them know how to go about taking the exam as
3 well. And my last question, fire prevention is
4 something extremely important. We want to make sure
5 that these fires are being prevented. How much of
6 the FDNY budget is allocated to fire prevention and
7 what is the allocation for exactly?

8 ROBERT TUCKER: Commissioner.

9 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: So, we might have to get back
10 to you on the budget numbers because I don't know if
11 I have them in front of me but I certainly can give
12 you headcount numbers.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Okay.

14 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: So of our overall budgeted
15 headcount, that's a little over 17,000. Obviously
16 most of that is uniformed and EMS after that but our
17 largest civilian group is fire prevention. So, we
18 are budgeted for about 552. We have about 522 active
19 right now. Some of those vacancies are in the fire
20 protection inspector title series. We're looking to
21 have a class in the coming months. Fire protection
22 inspectors make up about 350 of the 522 and the other
23 titles you know range from various engineering
24 titles, various project management and plan review

2 titles as well as like clerical and administrative
3 support.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you.

5 ROBERT TUCKER: I think it's important just to
6 note that many of those titles are generating revenue
7 for the city and so, I think it - you know I don't
8 know if they're revenue neutral but they're out there
9 performing tasks that are generating revenue for the
10 city.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: We appreciate that. We
12 need as much revenue as possible for our city so we
13 do appreciate that. Commissioner and your team,
14 thank you so much for being here today. Commissioner
15 would love when you do get those fire houses, if you
16 want to come to the district and we maybe could tour
17 them together to see the capital improvements they
18 need but thank you.

19 ROBERT TUCKER: Consider it done. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. I just wanted to
21 say, you spoke about the meeting that you held in
22 Queens. It was certainly unique and you had Council
23 Members there that were from this Committee that were
24 in Queens and also Community Boards and the Borough
25 President and the fact that you were there was as I

2 said very unique and yes, we did realize a get from
3 that meeting but you also mentioned the fire house.
4 Had that meeting not taken place, the Borough
5 President, the Community Board and our office would
6 not have known about that shovel going in the ground
7 in August. In fact, we were of the impression that
8 it was underfunded and wouldn't be happening but
9 because of you, your First Deputy Commissioner and
10 Jason Shelly did the background work, and I want to
11 thank my Chief of Staff Phyllis Inzerillo for working
12 with you on that. We found out that there will be a
13 shovel in the ground.

14 So, that type of dialogue, that type of meeting
15 in smaller groups that you are really in favor of,
16 really does get a lot of work done and there out of
17 that meeting, we walked out not thinking oh, well
18 just another meeting. That meeting really garnered a
19 lot of support for the FDNY and also you wound up
20 walking away with money like you said and the Borough
21 President is committed to it. And he called me
22 yesterday and he was so happy about the fire house
23 because it really does need to be replaced and I
24 thank you for the work that you did in the
25 background. So, I just, I want to get back to a

2 fleet maintenance. Of the 200 items of fleet that
3 you have outstanding. Is there a timeline for when
4 they will come?

5 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: Yes, so we're currently
6 receiving an order of rear mounts and tower ladders
7 is coming in now and we expect that squads and high
8 pressure pumpers will be following that but we do
9 have estimated dates for all the items on order.
10 They're just a little bit longer than they had been
11 historically.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: What's longer?

13 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: In some cases, it's
14 relatively short but in other cases it is a little
15 bit longer. Hold on. So, right now we have 7
16 pumpers and 63 ladders that are behind schedule. And
17 so, we are tracking those with what the estimated
18 delivery dates are and what the original dates were.
19 I mean in some cases, like five or six months beyond
20 when we were originally anticipating that they would
21 come in.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And do you think that's
23 because and they're critical delays let's face it,
24 because we need this apparatus on the street. Do you
25 think that in addition to the backlog because of

2 COVID but we're now in 2025, do you think a lot of
3 that is because of procurement right here from OMB?
4 The procurement process?

5 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: I think in general we've had
6 a lot of cooperation in terms of putting in our
7 orders earlier. We've had to do accelerations in the
8 last few capital plans and we'll probably have to
9 continue doing that in order to get our orders in
10 even sooner to make sure that ultimately the vehicle
11 delivery lines up. But we have been working with OMB
12 to accelerate those things as we approach them.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay and so a lot of the
14 fleet is outdated? So what happens when an apparatus
15 is outdated and it has to remain in service?

16 ROBERT TUCKER: I'm going to ask Chief Esposito
17 to talk about our spare fleet and etc..

18 JOHN ESPOSITO: Sure, so even though some of our
19 fleet is outdated, we don't see a safety concern with
20 that. Every apparatus that's in service is inspected
21 by the firefighters and the officers twice a day. So
22 when an apparatus is outdated, they can only respond
23 to emergencies. So a report of a fire, a report of a
24 medical call, they would respond. They are not able
25

2 to use that apparatus for other things such as
3 building inspection or hydrant inspection.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay and how much funding is
5 allocated in this current budget for fire truck
6 maintenance replacement and how does this compare to
7 prior years?

8 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: Yeah, so we don't separate
9 out the maintenance funding by fire trucks and
10 ambulances, so kind of combined to maintain our
11 fleet. As the Commissioner had mentioned earlier, we
12 have about 240 staff and our OTPS budget right now is
13 at \$42.5 million. Some of the OTPS money that we got
14 is part of the preliminary budget actually went
15 towards that to increase the amount that we had
16 available for things like auto parts.

17 That OTPS amount is a little bit higher than
18 prior years so we spent you know \$31 million in FY22,
19 \$37 million in '23 and \$39 million in '24, so our
20 budget has gone up a little bit in '25. It does go
21 down again in '26, so that's something that we're
22 looking at and it might need to be adjusted in the
23 future. In terms of sort of vehicle replacements,
24 that happens through the capital budget. Overall in
25 the 11 year window from '25 to '35, we had \$761

2 million funded for vehicles in our budget. That
3 includes \$430 million for frontline fire apparatus,
4 \$151 million for supervisory specialty and support
5 vehicles, and \$181 million for initial equipment on
6 all of our vehicles. Oddly enough the capital
7 funding for ambulances is not in our capital budget,
8 it is in the Health + Hospitals capital budget. But
9 the are funded \$462 million across the plan window
10 for our ambulance replacements.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Why is that since EMS is
12 part of the Fire Department? Why doesn't the fire -
13 why isn't the Administration allowing the Fire
14 Department to embrace EMS fully and incorporate it
15 fully, so that it's part of your budget?

16 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: So there are long and
17 complicated historical reasons why that have to do
18 with Medicaid funding but there have also been
19 changes to Medicaid funding recently and so, that is
20 something that we're looking at for the future,
21 whether this is still something that makes financial
22 sense.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah, I mean when it comes
24 to EMS, they can't just be a little bit pregnant.
25 They are either part of the FDNY or they're not. So,

2 we'll - I'll do whatever we need to do, however I can
3 help to make sure that they are respected, get their
4 pay parity and become full fledged members. You know
5 even through funding for their vehicles.

6 As long as we're on the topic of their vehicles,
7 what is the average mileage and where on the FDNY's
8 ambulance fleet and how often are ambulances being
9 replaced?

10 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: So, the average mileage for
11 our ambulance fleet is 36,080 miles right now and we
12 aim to replace ambulances every five to six years.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And how does the FDNY ensure
14 that ambulances are adequately maintained to handle
15 the increasing demand for EMS service?

16 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: So they're on a 45 day
17 preventative maintenance cycle.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay so my next question has
19 to do with budget. So, what is the current budget
20 for ambulance repairs and replacement? Does that
21 come from your budget or H+H?

22 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: That comes from our budget.
23 So, it's the same budget that I talked about before,
24 the same 240 staff and OTPS.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay and have there been
3 advancements such as electrical hybrid models? And
4 is the FDNY considering that for its ambulance fleet
5 to reduce emissions and improve efficiency?

6 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: So, all of our current
7 ambulances are equipped with auxiliary power units
8 that work as an anti-idling measure. They work with
9 solar panels to keep the batteries charged and to
10 minimize idling time.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay.

12 ROBERT TUCKER: Just so you know Chair, we're
13 trying in this beta paramedic response unit, we are
14 trying to use battery operated vehicles for that.
15 It's an experiment. You know that's complicated
16 because we don't have charging at every ambulance
17 station but we're seeing how that's working in an
18 attempt to go as green as possible.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I appreciate your answer.
20 I'd like to mention that we've been joined by Council
21 Member Feliz. Just before I - Council Member Feliz
22 has a question but I have just one follow up here.
23 How many fire houses and stations would you say are
24 in need of immediate repair and do you have cost
25 estimates?

2 ROBERT TUCKER: Commissioner Christoff.

3 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: I think we would have to
4 follow up on that. I mean we do have information on
5 outstanding work orders, fire houses and what we know
6 to be our priorities for you know replacements and
7 reconstruction projects, which we generally work down
8 in priority order given the funding that we have
9 available but we can follow up with specifics.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: That would be great because
11 often times and I visit the fire houses often. I do
12 see they're in desperate need of rooves and they have
13 leaks in their changing rooms, in the locker rooms,
14 in the showers, water is running when it shouldn't
15 and we were able to mitigate a lot of those issues
16 only because our office got involved. So, what is
17 the timeline for when a complaint is made about an
18 issue structurally to when it gets fixed? And if you
19 don't have that, you can get back to me with that as
20 well. You can follow up with that.

21 I now yield to Council Member Feliz.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Thank you so much Chair.
23 I just want to start by thanking you all for your
24 service. Every single day we see members of the FDNY
25 putting your lives at risk to save people in all of

2 our communities and our city. So I just want to
3 start by thanking you all, you and your team for all
4 the work that you do for the people of this city.

5 A few questions about fires in general but
6 specifically e-bikes but I guess the first question
7 is more of a general one. Can you give us numbers
8 regarding how many fires did we have in 2024? Can
9 you give us a breakdown by borough if you have that
10 and also give us a breakdown by borough if you have
11 that? And also give us information about the top
12 five causes. I'm sure e-bikes is one of them.

13 ROBERT TUCKER: By boroughs?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Uh yup, maybe total for
15 2024 and then yeah, breakdown by borough.

16 ROBERT TUCKER: Give me one second and I'm going
17 to give you the answer.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Take your time.

19 ROBERT TUCKER: You're talking about structural
20 fires?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Yes.

22 ROBERT TUCKER: Got it. Let us follow up with
23 you on that. I mean we don't have - you know we have
24 it broken down but not as specifically as you've
25 asked and so we'll come back you on that.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: What about total amount of
3 fires in 2024?

4 ROBERT TUCKER: The issue that we're having is
5 you know are you talking about responses? Is it a
6 garbage can that's on fire or a fire that you want us
7 to add in? That's what they're fumbling around with
8 now, car fires, etc., but we have some - yeah, I mean
9 exactly. This is from the Mayor's Management Report?
10 Yeah, so do you want to just give him what's in the
11 MMR and then we'll come back to you more specifically
12 as it breaks down with structural fires.

13 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: Yeah, so as reported in the
14 MMR so for last Fiscal Year FY24, the number of
15 structural residential fires was 19,544. The number
16 of structural nonresidential fires was 4,465. The
17 number of nonstructural fires was 12,260.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: That's a lot of fires.
19 Uhm, last year and the year before we passed
20 legislation to strengthen FDNY's enforcement powers
21 on the issue of e-bikes. So, can you talk to us
22 about what systems we have in place? Also, what
23 triggers that system including, for example calling
24 311 to report unlawful sale for e-bikes? Talk to us
25 about that system a little bit.

2 ROBERT TUCKER: Yeah, well first of all, I want
3 to thank you for all the work that the Council has
4 done in helping us fight e-bike fires. We have
5 reported a 67 percent decrease in fire deaths. We
6 had a very successful campaign around the you know
7 educating the public on ways to store and charge e-
8 mobility devices hopefully outside of their homes.
9 We have worked very closely with UL to try to get
10 more certified batteries into the system and where
11 we're seeing big problems is with uncertified
12 batteries that tend to be less expensive and therefore
13 more attractive for purchasers. Uhm, we have a
14 lithium-ion battery taskforce that's out in the field
15 doing all different kinds of enforcement including
16 working with the Department of buildings to vacate
17 seven locations that we deem to be so dangerous that
18 the building had to be shut. We are not ever going
19 to stop talking about lithium-ion battery fires,
20 which we see a lot of because they're extremely
21 dangerous to our members and they're extremely
22 dangerous to the public and uhm what we really need
23 in addition to the help that you and the state have
24 given us is federal legislation to stop the import of
25 these batteries at ports and to give one agency, a

1 federal agency the authority to oversee the
2 regulation around these batteries because the great
3 work that the City Council has done in helping us,
4 which has yielded much better numbers, isn't as
5 effective if you can just go across the river to New
6 Jersey and buy something that's legal there and not
7 legal here. So, the federal legislation will really
8 help us and we were close, then we weren't but I
9 think we're back on track again to get that
10 legislation passed in Washington DC.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Yup, yup, thank you for
13 the information. Can you give us information about -
14 or maybe compare the 2023 and 2024 number? Something
15 you mentioned, there's been a decrease of like 65
16 percent in deaths. Can you give us the numbers on
17 that and also the amount of fires. My understanding
18 is that the deaths are down but the fires are pretty
19 much; the numbers are pretty much the same if I'm
20 correct.

21 ROBERT TUCKER: So, in 2021 we had four deaths.
22 In 2022 we has six deaths. In 2023 we had 18 deaths
23 related all to lithium-ion battery fires. And then
24 happily in 2024, we had six but I say happily in
25 that, that's the 67 percent decrease but be aware and

2 assured that we are not going to stop talking about
3 this till zero is the number.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Okay, what about numbers
5 regarding general fires, regardless if there was a
6 death or not. Do you have any numbers on that? If
7 not you could send it over after.

8 ROBERT TUCKER: So, you're talking about non-
9 yeah, in the MMR.

10 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: Yeah, the civilian fire
11 fatalities as reported in the MMR. So, the number
12 for the year prior to last year FY23 was 102 and the
13 number for last fiscal year FY24 was 74.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Hmm, okay.

15 ROBERT TUCKER: And I would just note, I think
16 it's current that we're at 22 right now. We were at
17 19 this time last year. That's not a happy trend.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Okay and last question,
19 actually two more questions. How big is the team
20 that does inspections regarding these defective e-
21 bikes that are being sold? How big is the team? How
22 big is the budget? And also any - do you think what
23 we have is enough at least to be able to properly
24 enforce or do you think more is needed?

2 ROBERT TUCKER: I'm going to let Commissioner
3 Christoff give you specific numbers but you know
4 again, where we're talking about the type of danger
5 that we're talking about to members of the department
6 and to the 8.3 million New Yorkers and numbers that
7 are still you know six in 2024, I think that uhm, I
8 think that uhm, you know the more we have the better.
9 I think that you should be assured that we are
10 deploying resources both from our Bureau of Fire
11 Prevention, from the Fire Operations and from Fire
12 Prevention at this very proactively.

13 But you know I think it would be a mistake to sit
14 here when we've had six deaths in 2024 and 18 in 2023
15 and say we've got this thing solved. We're far from
16 that but Commissioner.

17 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: Yeah, so just to echo that,
18 you know this is something that all of our fire
19 companies are looking out for when they're out in the
20 field and it's something that all of our fire
21 inspectors are also looking for but we do have a
22 special inspection team in fire prevention of five
23 staff that focus on this.

24 JOHN ESPOSITO: And our Bureau of Fire
25 Investigation works with other city agencies to

2 conduct the enforcement of the bike shops and the
3 other stores that sell these batteries and distribute
4 the batteries that don't comply with our rules and
5 laws.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Alright, thank you so
7 much. A final question/point yeah, definitely agree
8 we need federal legislation on this issue. We could
9 pass a million laws on the issue but if people could
10 just go to not even New Jersey but Yonkers, anywhere
11 outside of the City of New York and just purchase
12 these e-bikes, we'll go back to square one. So
13 definitely agree with you n that.

14 Final question. Uhm anyway we could strengthen
15 FDNY's enforcement powers or do you think that what
16 we have now is enough based on the issue that we
17 have, which is you know a City of New York being
18 effected but also being effected due to other cities
19 and states around us bringing in e-bikes unlawfully
20 and causing the issue?

21 ROBERT TUCKER: You know I think the Council has
22 been great and I think the Department has really
23 reacted well to the laws that you have helped us
24 with. I don't know that it's your specific question
25 but I'm very proud of the FDNY's response lately to

2 parking on fire hydrants. This has been an absolute
3 disaster in the last few months. We had two people
4 killed in a fire in Brooklyn. A car was directly on
5 a fire hydrant in front of the fire building. We had
6 two people killed in the Bronx in a fire in a temple,
7 a car parked directly on a fire hydrant and I'm very
8 proud of the people in FDNY that creatively came up
9 with the concept to serve a criminal summons on the
10 owner of the vehicle. First time we ever used that
11 statute and a judge in the Bronx has the discretion
12 to fine up to \$5,000 and fine the owner of that
13 vehicle \$4,000. The Council should know that in
14 yesterdays five alarm fire in the Bronx, we were
15 confronted with a vehicle parked on the fire hydrant.
16 We personally served that owner as well and that will
17 find its way through the Bronx criminal courts. We
18 hope although we did not have a death, we hope that
19 the court finds that behavior to be abhorrent and we
20 ask all New Yorkers to please stop parking on fire
21 hydrants. Seconds count and we need to get water on
22 fires fast and when we have cars parked on fire
23 hydrants, one you can't see the hydrant and two, you
24 certainly can't attach a hose as quickly and
25 effectively to it when a car is right next to it.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Right, yeah, alright thank
3 you so much. No more questions. Thank you Chair and
4 thank you all in the FDNY for your service.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA Thank you. Council Member
6 Riley.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you Chair.
8 Commissioners, one more question. We've heard
9 anecdotal reports of backlogs in 911 response times.
10 While we understand that 911 operators are not within
11 your budget, can you provide insight into delays
12 between constituent calls and operators actually
13 answering?

14 ROBERT TUCKER: I'm just, I'm just, I just want
15 to make sure I answer your question. So are you
16 asking about the amount of time it takes between the
17 call and the call answering.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Yes, the call and the call
19 answering and then you guys actually responding
20 because we're hearing issues that uhm, constituents
21 are calling 911 and sometimes they're getting the
22 voicemail while things are actually taking place and
23 happening. So we just wanted your you know input on
24 that, even though 911 operators are not part of your
25 budget.

2 ROBERT TUCKER: Well, yeah I mean, stories like
3 that are horrifying to me and I'm willing to work
4 with my other agency Commissioners to you know
5 colleagues to address that. No one should get
6 voicemail when they call 911. Obviously we do have
7 people calling 911 that we'd rather call 311 or some
8 other you know make a different type of call but we
9 want every single person that calls 911 for FDNY
10 services to get a call taker on the phone who is
11 knowledgeable, who is empathetic and who is capable
12 of dispatching the appropriate apparatus or ambulance
13 to the scene as quickly as possible.

14 So, there's no excuse to get voicemail when you
15 call 911.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you Commissioner and
17 just would love your partnership and working with
18 other agencies to make sure that we can address this
19 the right way because as you said, nobody should call
20 911 and get a voicemail. So thank you Chair for the
21 last question.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah I mean I have called
23 911 myself and was put on hold and so, and we have
24 addressed it at other hearings but it is a problem
25 and it could be part and parcel of why there is an

2 increase in delayed response times. But the citywide
3 response time to structural fires has increased from
4 five minutes and ten seconds to five minutes and 25
5 seconds. In addition to say 911 calls, would you say
6 that the dispatch times - would you say that there
7 has been an increase in response times due to street
8 designs, redesigns, traffic congestion, bicycle
9 lanes, bus lanes etc., etc.?

10 ROBERT TUCKER: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah, it's a simple answer.
12 We all know it. So congestion pricing. How does the
13 FDNY anticipate NYC's congestion pricing plan and how
14 will it impact the fire fighter response times,
15 particularly in heavily trafficked areas during peak
16 hours?

17 ROBERT TUCKER: Well look, congestion pricing is
18 here and we're dealing with it on several fronts. I
19 don't have a good answer for you on whether it's
20 impacted response times in a positive way or in a
21 negative way. There's no doubt for us it's a
22 challenge because we assign fire fighters and fire
23 officers and the EMT's and paramedics in the
24 congestion pricing zone and now they're paying a toll
25 to come to work. We're certainly hearing about that

2 from our members. We have had worked closely with
3 the Deputy Mayor for Operations and with OMB and we
4 are putting in place a reimbursement function for
5 those members who we detail in and out of the
6 congestion pricing zone but we're working closely
7 with the UFA and UFOA on this. I think that we're
8 productively having conversations around it. We are
9 - we have in place a transportation mechanism now for
10 fire fighters who require transportation in and out
11 of the congestion pricing zone from their fire house
12 to the detailed fire house. We currently detail
13 about 150 fire fighters a day from the home fire
14 house to either across the floor we call it or to
15 another fire house. Not always in and out of a
16 district but there are a lot of details to moving
17 fire fighters around so that we have minimum manning
18 and congestion pricing is something that we're
19 working with and around.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, the reimbursement, which
21 I think is great that they would be reimbursed. Is
22 that something that's in effect now or you're looking
23 to have it be in effect?

24 ROBERT TUCKER: We have City Hall's cooperation
25 on reimbursement for detailed fire fighters only.

2 So, you know yeah, going into the congestion pricing
3 zone. So, assuming you go from one area in Queens,
4 for example, into midtown Manhattan we will reimburse
5 you for that. That mechanism is getting into place
6 as we speak and City Hall has given us the green
7 light to move forward on that reimbursement but
8 there's more work to be done.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Right because if I heard
10 correctly, EMS workers and fire fighters can be moved
11 at any time from one fire house to another to cover.
12 So, then they would be going in and out of the
13 congestion zone again, so that's a problem.

14 ROBERT TUCKER: Yeah, it's less of a problem in
15 EMS because they're moving in EMS vehicles but our
16 fire fighters are not moving in fire department
17 vehicles.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Right that's a problem,
19 okay. We're going to talk about the promotional
20 exams. So, what impact has EMS to fire fighter
21 promotional exams had on EMS staffing levels? And
22 how does FDNY plan to address any resulting headcount
23 gaps? And I know that we have classes coming out so
24 I was very happy to hear that the amount of people
25 who have applied, thank you for mentioning that is

1 astounding. So I imagine that is one way that you're
2 working towards closing those gaps?

3 ROBERT TUCKER: Yeah, so the next three
4 promotional classes into the fire academy are almost
5 exclusively going to be EMT's and paramedics coming
6 from those ranks. As you heard from Commissioner
7 Noonan, we are - we recruited about 3,500 people to
8 take the test. Ultimately it's our experience that
9 about ten percent of those people will end up
10 becoming EMTs. So, that's about 350. You don't have
11 to be an economics major to figure out that 1,000 out
12 and 350 in leaves a gap. And so, and so we're
13 concerned about that no doubt and we're thinking
14 about ways to fill that gap and I'm working closely
15 with the members of the senior staff both in fire ops
16 and EMS ops to figure out what to do about that. We
17 don't think that the path from EMS to fire is a bad
18 one, so I don't want anyone to interpret what I'm
19 saying that in some way that that's not right. But
20 there's no doubt that we have a crisis nationally in
21 EMS recruiting and we're not going to just be able to
22 replace the fire fighters or the EMTs and paramedics
23 who are going over to fire ops in the traditional
24 methods that we have in the past.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Do you think that it's
3 because of the EMS wages, the pay parity? I know EMS
4 workers that want to make this their career. They
5 don't want to become fire fighters but they have no
6 choice because they cannot sustain a family and be
7 providers while making the money that EMS workers
8 make, and we've been crying pay parity for a very
9 long time. So, is that part of your discussion for
10 retention? Because that would be the best way to
11 close a gap is if there was retention in the ranks.

12 ROBERT TUCKER: We have some - sorry. We have
13 some fabulous career EMTs and paramedics. God Bless
14 You.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: God Bless you.

16 ROBERT TUCKER: Many of whom you know we rely on
17 and the city relies on heavily. The EMT's - they are
18 at the bargaining table now and are negotiating with
19 the city. The Mayor and City Hall have supported
20 something along - similar to what you're saying.
21 There's no doubt with 1.6 million calls for service a
22 year; that's an astronomical amount of work and EMTs
23 and paramedics are doing an unbelievably heroic job.
24 There's going to have to be a moment of reckoning
25 that in this review that I spoke about earlier, that

1 we're going to need to do things differently
2 regarding pre-hospital care in New York City. And
3 when I say that I want to be really clear that I'm
4 not in any way criticizing how it's been done. I'm
5 just saying that on a go forward basis, we're going
6 to have to do it differently. I don't think there's
7 one fix Chair. I think that rebuilding the EMS CAD
8 will help response times. It will even help the
9 quality of life and morale of the EMTs and paramedics
10 and the ambulance because I've been in an ambulance.
11 I'm not an EMT or a paramedic or a fire fighter but
12 it's hard to even read the screen. I mean, I've got
13 glasses hanging around my neck. The font size is
14 embarrassingly large on the things that I've printed
15 and I'm still wearing my glasses.

17 You know, we've got a lot of work to do with EMS
18 and I have a commitment from the Mayor to be you know
19 to be thoughtful and even reinventive if I have to be
20 with regard to EMS. And I would say that you know
21 nothing, nothing is off the table.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I'm happy to hear that
23 because you know the vast disparity in wages for them
24 has caused morale to lessen and caused a lack of
25 retention and caused you know larger gaps and

2 honestly they are going out on more calls and that's
3 why I say that FDNY has to embrace them and funds
4 have to be allocated.

5 ROBERT TUCKER: Yeah.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So that their wages can be
7 increased and I know you believe that and I believe
8 that and we can work together towards that if you
9 need a champion.

10 ROBERT TUCKER: Yeah, I'm looking forward to
11 working with you and the Administration on this. As
12 I said, I have a lot of support from the
13 Administration on the way I'm approaching it. Again,
14 it goes back to that CEO approach. I think that you
15 know we're all wearing the same patch here Chief
16 Fields and many of the EMS Chiefs over here. We're
17 all wearing the same patch with one agency and we're
18 going to operate like that on a going forward basis.

19 There are things we can do in addition to
20 reviewing the pay that I think would take because
21 look, so many people in FDNY work at FDNY because of
22 the mission. It's not just about the pay. And so,
23 pay is a factor but we've seen where a pay increase
24 doesn't change necessarily enough of the things to
25 make people want to come to work and do their job

1 productively and I'm really focused on it, and I
2 believe that it's one of the reasons I'm sitting
3 here. I think that the Mayor saw in some of the
4 ideas that I put forward to him during the process
5 that we went through to improve EMS from where it is
6 and build a pre-hospital care system that will work
7 well into you know 2050 and beyond.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. Let's talk about
10 overtime. So, the Mayoral director on overtime
11 control has been placing strict limits on overtime
12 spending across all city agencies, including FDNY and
13 EMS. Given that FDNY has long relied on overtime to
14 compensate for the staffing shortages and high call
15 volumes. These restrictions may impact response
16 times, recruitment and overall service delivery.
17 What percentage of FDNY and EMS operations currently
18 rely on overtime to meet service demands and how this
19 changed since the implementation of the mayoral
20 directive?

21 ROBERT TUCKER: I'm going to let Commissioner
22 Christoff give you the specific numbers but what I
23 would say is that you and the Committee and the
24 public should know that neither the Mayor nor the OMB
25 Director wants public safety impacted by the overtime

2 directive. Where we can look at overtime differently
3 is in our discretionary overtime, not necessarily in
4 our uniformed member overtime. The numbers will
5 inherently come down. We're about to promote how
6 many captains? 48 more captains and 64 more
7 lieutenants. The more we get the right number of
8 captains and lieutenants and battalion chiefs and
9 deputy chiefs in the seats and fire fighters in the
10 seats. Naturally there's an expense that comes along
11 with that but the overtime expense will come down.
12 And so, I'm working very closely with the OMB
13 Director on that. He just approved 26 Fire Marshals
14 and four Supervising Fire Marshals. That will bring
15 down overtime.

16 So, I think you know we're starting to be able to
17 make the argument more coherently but overtime, we're
18 operating on a lot of overtime in the fire
19 department. Commissioner.

20 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: Yeah, so to follow up on what
21 the Commissioner was saying on the fire side, over 80
22 percent of our overtime is tied to field operation.
23 So, that's staffing posts in the field. That's
24 contractually mandated field overtime, including the
25 overtime that's built into fire fighter schedules as

1 well as overtime related to late calls or moving fire
2 fighters across different locations to equalize
3 staffing.
4

5 On the EMS end, 70 percent of our overtime is
6 related to field operations, staffing ambulances. It
7 goes up to a similar 80 percent if you include
8 overtime associated with emergency medical dispatch,
9 which our EMS call takers and dispatchers that
10 respond to 911 calls for medical emergencies. None
11 of the overtime control measures are aimed at
12 reducing public services. So we're not looking to
13 reduce the number of units that are in operation at
14 all. The focus on reducing that kind of field
15 overtime has come on the side of trying to increase
16 headcount. So, on the fire side, we've been looking
17 to accelerate fire fighter classes, get them through
18 more quickly. We did actually work with OMB in the
19 summer. They approved additional resources to help
20 us with processing candidates. So, they approved an
21 additional 24 staff for us, primarily in our
22 candidate investigation division but also including
23 folks in health services and in other parts of the
24 department to make sure that we were able to process
25 candidates quickly in order to get those classes

2 through. We've also you know made some changes on
3 the training side to double the number of fire
4 lieutenants that we can promote at one time.

5 So, traditionally we've done about 32 at a time
6 but as the Commissioner noted, our next set of
7 lieutenant promotions is actually going to be 64 and
8 those 48 captains that we also talked about are
9 positions above our budgeted headcount and we are
10 doing that in order to bring down this kind of
11 ordered over time. The focus otherwise has been on
12 you know the remainder of our overtime, which is
13 discretionary. So it's making sure that full duty
14 personnel are in the field as much as possible. That
15 we are leveraging our light duty personnel for any
16 non-field tasks that can happen and seeing where we
17 can reduce things in non-field areas.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah, it just makes sense.
19 If you have all your lines filled and you have the
20 staffing, your overtime comes down. It's easy, right
21 and now it seems that if you have the - I know often
22 times lines are funded but no one ever gets hired.
23 So I don't think that that will happen with you at
24 the helm. Do we have any other questions? Oh, I see
25 we've been joined by Council Member Lincoln Restler.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great, thanks so much
3 Chair Ariola. Oh too excited. Thank you
4 Commissioner and team. Good to see you all today. I
5 have a few random questions. I just want to start
6 with a parochial one, which is we had a tragic fire
7 in our district on Thanksgiving Day, so four months
8 ago. This was a manhole explosion on Remsen Street
9 in Brooklyn Heights, some of you may remember.
10 Firstly, just want to thank the men and women of the
11 FDNY for showing up on a holiday and keeping our
12 community safe.

13 What bothered me though about this particular
14 incident was five days before members of our
15 community reached out to the FDNY to come and
16 investigate because there was smoke coming out of the
17 manhole. FDNY came right away closed it out, five
18 days later the manhole explodes, sets a car on fire,
19 blows through an apartment building. People still
20 haven't been able to move back into their homes.
21 Fortunately no body was killed but it was a terrible
22 incident and I've essentially gotten you know pats on
23 the head and radio silence from Con Ed and FDNY in
24 the intervening four months and members of the
25 community want to get answers on what happened and

2 why and I understand that it takes some time for the
3 fire marshals to provide a report but it's very
4 frustrating to not be able to say anything to my
5 community about what happened here and what we're
6 doing about it to make sure that the community is
7 safe because we've had other fires in Brooklyn
8 Heights ever since relating to other manholes that I
9 do not believe were related but have freaked
10 everybody out.

11 So, A, how do we get answers more quickly in
12 general? And B, is there anything that you can say
13 about this specific incident or who I can follow up
14 with to get answers in the immediate future?

15 ROBERT TUCKER: I'm going to ask our Chief of
16 Department to address the specific Thanksgiving Day
17 incident and then of course we'll figure out how you
18 can get answers more quickly from us on a going
19 forward basis.

20 JOHN ESPOSITO: In an aging city with the
21 infrastructure as old as it is, manhole fires
22 unfortunately are a common occurrence. So we do work
23 together with Con Edison to respond and mitigate
24 them. The specifics of the Thanksgiving Day other
25 than the fact of where the fire broke out, which was

2 unusual for us in our experience, we'd have to defer
3 to Bureau of Fire Investigation and get their report
4 and see if we're able to share that.

5 ROBERT TUCKER: Yeah, the Chief Fire Marshal is
6 not here but I will meet with the Chief Fire Marshal
7 today and we'll get back to you on that.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I really appreciate it.
9 I think it's you know I don't mean to harp too much
10 on a single incident but it worries people when they
11 call in. They call an incident, FDNY comes
12 investigates, we think everything is okay and then
13 five days later we have a tragedy. Uhm it just - and
14 then we don't get answers for four months to
15 understand what occurred. I get that these issues
16 are complex. I get we have aging infrastructure but
17 there's got to be a way for us to improve
18 communication and be able to - because you know I
19 look like an idiot as the Council Member when people
20 keep asking me, what happened, we need information.
21 I don't like that. I don't like that we don't get
22 any information when we request it repeatedly and
23 repeatedly and repeatedly.

24 Okay, just a couple other items I wanted to ask
25 about. Recently, we redesigned McGuinness Boulevard.

1 This is a tertiary issue of import to the fire
2 department but I think it's an important one.

3
4 Recently we redesigned McGuinness Boulevard with the
5 Department of Transportation, as many of you may
6 know. It was a big fight over many - over a couple
7 of years. We were able to design much wider bike
8 lanes than had historically been utilized around the
9 City of New York that can accommodate EMS ambulances,
10 even fire trucks as far as I understand. Is this a
11 design; I'm not sure who the right person to direct
12 this question to if that's you Commissioner or
13 someone else. Is this a design you all are familiar
14 with? Do you think it's a better, potential approach
15 that can help ensure expeditious emergency response
16 times as we look to accommodate safe cycling with
17 protected bike lanes in more and more neighborhoods
18 around the city?

19 ROBERT TUCKER: Look, from where I stand it's
20 more a Chief Esposito comment. I would like to keep
21 our emergency apparatus on the streets and only in
22 the event of a major emergency invade the secured
23 space for bicycles and other e-mobility
24 transportation. It sort of reminds me of a thought
25 that I was having about you know years ago, the

2 question could be asked, can you drive on the
3 sidewalks and the answer is no, not unless there was
4 you know a really major emergency or reason to do so.

5 We work with DOT very effectively and
6 Commissioner Rodriguez and I speak regularly and I
7 know my staff and his staff speak regularly. What's
8 important to me and we have through our City Planning
9 units and other units within the fire department, the
10 ability to make sure that our fire and our EMS
11 apparatus can get down the streets. We don't want
12 anything to impede that and you know there's
13 complicated neighborhoods in lower Manhattan for
14 example, in Greenwich Village and other areas, in
15 Brooklyn Heights for sure that make it sometimes more
16 complicated and we've made accommodations. Including
17 rear tiller mounted fire trucks with someone in the
18 back steering the back of the fire truck but I don't
19 know that we need necessarily to be more involved in
20 that process than we already are.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, for what's it's
22 worth, I want to you know want to make sure that we
23 achieve a network of protected bike lanes around the
24 city so it's safe for cyclists and we reduce
25 unnecessary deaths and serious injuries for people

2 riding a bicycle and protected bike lanes are a
3 proven way to improve pedestrian safety as well. But
4 we don't want to do it at the expense of emergency
5 response times. So we just want to be very mindful
6 of every design that we're doing that's in a
7 collaborative way. I know that's been a priority of
8 Chair Ariola and I'm intrigued by the design on
9 McGuinness Boulevard as we achieved a road diet there
10 that has significantly already improved pedestrian
11 safety in the neighborhood that it could be an
12 alternative approach for ensuring expeditious
13 response times.

14 And so, we'll be looking carefully at the data.
15 I understand we don't want ambulances and fire trucks
16 in bike lanes when they don't absolutely need to be.
17 I appreciate that being your response Commissioner
18 but I do think it's worth looking at if we can afford
19 the space for some wider bike lanes that can allow
20 for that when there is congestion in a given area
21 that's a worthy approach.

22 The last thing I'd like to ask if I may is around
23 congestion pricing, for which I'm a big advocate.
24 Can you speak to improved emergency response times I
25 lower Manhattan south of 59th street for both FDNY

2 and EMS over the first two and a half months of this
3 year?

4 ROBERT TUCKER: We don't have the data on -

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Even for January?

6 ROBERT TUCKER: No, not yet.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: When will we have that
8 data?

9 ROBERT TUCKER: Uhm you know I think we need a
10 little more time on it. We had a long talk about
11 congestion pricing already. Congestion pricing in my
12 opinion is not, there's no one fix that's going to
13 improve response times.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Certainly not.

15 ROBERT TUCKER: And I don't think the key here is
16 congestion pricing. I have no opinion on congestion
17 pricing except the opinion I rendered to the Chair.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But I didn't ask - with
19 all due respect, I didn't ask for your opinion. I'm
20 just asking for the data.

21 ROBERT TUCKER: I'll get you the data.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So, when will we have
23 the data? When do we normally - what's the normal
24 lag time on emergency response time data? When
25 should we have it? Quarterly, monthly, what is it

2 that I'm looking for here? I thought it was monthly
3 data. I thought we should already have had it by
4 now. I'm a little confused. My staff has been
5 tracking it on a weekly basis, so I'm eager to
6 understand.

7 ROBERT TUCKER: Yeah, I think we'll be able to
8 give you something in the next few weeks.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah, in all fairness
10 Council Member it is a brand new method and so, even
11 the stats that we're getting from the MTA are not
12 exact. So, I think that you want exact stats and
13 that's what you're waiting on.

14 ROBERT TUCKER: Well, yes and we don't have it
15 broken down in the CP zone specifically.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Sure, but you have it
17 broken down by -

18 ROBERT TUCKER: Citywide and boroughwide.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But you have nothing
20 that's a smaller catchment area than boroughwide
21 response times?

22 ROBERT TUCKER: We don't break it down that way
23 but we will for you in the next few weeks. We're
24 working on it now.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I think it's critically
3 important in real time the Governor is talking to the
4 President today in the oval office about this issue
5 and the issue is pending in the courts and we have a
6 lot of data points on how many people are going to
7 the theater and how many pedestrians are out there
8 and what the congestion times are and all different
9 kinds of things but the emergency response time data
10 will be very powerful for a lot of folks to
11 understand whether this is something that's having a
12 positive impact in saving lives. So, we do
13 appreciate whatever you can share as quickly as you
14 can share it, and with that, I will shut up. Thank
15 you very much for the latitude Chair.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. I just want to
17 ask you a couple as long as we're talking about the
18 federal government. So, how much of the federal
19 funding does the FDNY currently receive and what
20 percentage of the Departments budget is reliant on
21 these funds?

22 ROBERT TUCKER: So the Department receives about
23 \$110 million, \$113 million of federal funding. Much
24 of that funding is World Trade Center related and we
25 rely on it and it's important to us.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And have you received any
3 guidance from federal agencies regarding any
4 potential changes to that funding?

5 ROBERT TUCKER: We only were impacted very
6 quickly and momentarily in one research grant that
7 was a part of the World Trade Center grant that
8 compared health, cancer diagnosis from fire fighters
9 in New York City with diagnosis from fire fighters in
10 other major urban cities. And that grant, when we
11 learned that it was being terminated, that's a grant
12 that comes through Einstein. It's a medical grant
13 but we have the money. That was - we worked together
14 with our elected officials and that was turned back
15 on.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: That's good to know. I
17 just, I want to go back the wildfires because they
18 seemed to have spiked. So do you have any factors
19 that you think contributed to the severe increase in
20 brush fires for the same period from 2023 to 2024?

21 ROBERT TUCKER: I mean it was incredibly dry
22 during that period of time. We did see some brush
23 fires in some very unique locations like right in the
24 middle of Prospect Park. I was at that fire. We had
25 a very significant brush fire in Inwood Park in

2 Northern Manhattan where we had some very unique
3 water problems. There are no hydrants right in the
4 middle of these thick forests if you will. For in
5 Inwood we brought one of our large fire boats up the
6 Hudson River and drafted water from the Hudson River
7 into Inwood Park, you know it's pretty unique. I
8 mean we have the capability of doing that but it was
9 a challenge.

10 I think the most significant contributor to the
11 brush fires was how dry it was and for such a long
12 period of time.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Hmm, hmm, I agree. Okay, I
14 now yield to Council Member Marmorato.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Alright so just give
16 me one second, let me get my notes up here. So I
17 just want to talk a little bit about the fire
18 marshals. What's your operating budget for the fire
19 marshals and how many do you have?

20 LIZETTE CHRISTOFF: So our budgeted headcount for
21 fire marshals is 110 and we currently have 92. Our
22 budgeted headcount for supervising fire marshals is
23 26 and we currently have 24. As the Commissioner
24 mentioned earlier, we do approval to move forward
25 with a fire marshal class, so we will be having a

2 class shortly for at least 26 fire marshals and we
3 will be proceeding with promotions for four
4 supervising fire marshals.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Do have any issues
6 with like recruitment?

7 ROBERT TUCKER: No, I think we have a pretty - we
8 have a list. It's a promotional exam. A list and we
9 you know, we'll take people off of that list.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, cool. Alright
11 thank you so much. Thank you Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: We've been joined by Council
13 Member Nurse and I don't believe she has a question
14 at this time.

15 If there are no other questions, then I just
16 want to say when you're in your talks, I kind about
17 beach units because many of us have beaches in our
18 district and we really do need some EMS beach units
19 down there because people can get a little silly
20 during the summer time when they're at the beach and
21 at the local restaurants and bars. So, there's a lot
22 of injuries.

23 ROBERT TUCKER: Yeah absolutely. Thank you for
24 that and also I met with the Parks Commissioner

2 recently about our joint activities in the Rockaway
3 in specifically.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay and just in closing, I
5 would like to make a statement. I had many of these
6 hearings before and the fact that you came so
7 prepared but not just you, you brought a team that
8 really had your back. That if you needed an answer,
9 it was provided and that's not what we see often. I
10 already, I'm seeing a lift in morale with the members
11 of your department just in this room right now under
12 your leadership and what we heard from our members
13 and from you is that we have a lot of needs because
14 we have a lot of ideas, a lot of ideas that you have
15 and your team has. You're thinking out of the box.
16 You're doing a lot of critical thinking and we need
17 money for that and that's why we have to take all
18 things into consideration and that's why I continue
19 to implore the Mayor to fund \$1 billion to the fire
20 department that would be shared with EMS so that you
21 can get all these things done. Because things -
22 we're having more fires, not less fires. We're
23 having more injuries not less injuries. People are
24 calling 911 for more things, not less things. We
25 need to have a fleet that's up to date. We need to

2 really grow with AI and all the different measures
3 that you want to take place and we can't do that with
4 little drops of money here and drops of money there.
5 You have been flatlined. The Fire Department has
6 been flatlined for a lot of years. You didn't
7 realize any PEGs and we were supposed to be very
8 thankful for that. No, we need money. We need money
9 in order to get things done and I think we need to
10 now be compensated for all the years that we didn't
11 get anything and \$1 billion is not a lot of money in
12 the scheme of things, when it's for a department that
13 has been getting the job done and that's probably the
14 down fall and the reason why because no matter what,
15 you always got your job done. You made sure the
16 person got to the hospital. You made sure the
17 building on fire put out. You made sure that people
18 were rescued. You did that with lack of resource and
19 staffing. I don't want to hear that anymore from the
20 Administration. I know the Administration is here
21 but I've spoken to the Mayor directly about it. This
22 is not - it's not you know any outside you know
23 inside baseball or speaking behind anyone's back. \$1
24 billion is the ask from this Committee, from this
25 Chair for the FDNY so that they can do their job.

2 Thank you Commissioner Tucker for all that you've
3 done thus far. First Deputy Commissioner Guerra for
4 always being on the other side of the phone when we
5 call and for going out into the field and making your
6 fire fighters feel that you have their backs. Thank
7 you so much.

8 We can now - you guys are dismissed. Thank you
9 so much. [02:04:28] - [02:04:40] We're going to do a
10 five minute break and then we'll have NYCEM come in.
11 RECESS [02:04:44]- [02:17:46]

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Good afternoon. We're now
13 continuing with the Fire and Emergency Management
14 Budget hearing and we are joined by Commissioner of
15 NYCEM Zach Iscol, First Deputy Commissioner Christina
16 Farrell and Chief Financial Officer Christopher
17 Blanco.

18 We'll now ask Committee Counsel to swear in the
19 panel.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. Just raise
21 your right and affirm that you will tell the truth,
22 the whole truth and nothing but the truth and to
23 answer honestly to Council Member questions.
24 Recognizing that you do affirm that. Thank you. You
25 may go ahead.

2 ZACH ISCOL: Alright, good morning Chair Ariola
3 and members of the City Council. I am Zach Iscol,
4 Commissioner of the New York City Emergency
5 Management Department. I am joined today by our
6 First Deputy Commissioner Christina Farrell and our
7 Chief Financial Officer Christopher Blanco.

8 New York City Emergency Management has a big
9 mission. We lead the development of the city's
10 Emergency Management plans and the coordination of
11 multiagency response to emergencies in New York City.
12 We also education the public about preparedness and
13 advance long-term initiatives that reduce risk and
14 increase the resiliency of New York City. Due to
15 climate change, social and economic issues,
16 international conflict, cyber threats, disease
17 outbreaks, and aging infrastructure, new and
18 worsening emergencies continue to threaten New York
19 City. Bottom line, our job is to do everything we
20 can to prevent emergencies, to ensure the city is
21 prepared for them, to respond and manage them, and to
22 then help the city, New Yorkers, businesses,
23 communities, and neighborhoods recover as quickly as
24 possible.

2 Last year, NYCEM monitored 3,331 incidents from
3 our Watch Command and responded to 786 planned events
4 and no-notice emergencies across the city, deploying
5 staff and equipment alongside our sister city, state
6 and federal agencies, and private and nonprofit
7 sector partners. These included an extraordinary
8 range of events and incidents. A 4.8 magnitude
9 earthquake struck near New York City on April 5th, a
10 global IT outage involving crowd strike software
11 impacting city governments, companies and
12 organizations around the world in July. In the fall
13 of 2024 drought brought us the driest spell in the
14 city's recorded history.

15 The drought led to unprecedented challenges
16 including a two week stretch between October and
17 November in which the FDNY responded to 229 brush
18 fires citywide, the highest amount in a two week
19 period in New York City history.

20 We activated and managed the city's Emergency
21 Operations Center 19 times for severe weather,
22 flooding and other disruptions around the city,
23 allowing us to coordinate with partners to address
24 critical issues and maintain essential services. We
25 also continued supporting the city's asylum seeker

2 response operations as they evolved to meet
3 challenging needs throughout the year.

4 The people and communities of New York City are
5 at the heart of what we do. In 2024, we launched the
6 city's first ever citywide multilingual mailer to
7 every residential address in the city to encourage
8 all New Yorkers to sign up for Notify NYC, the city's
9 official source for free emergency alerts. We
10 introduced new emergency messaging channels on
11 WhatsApp, Threads, and Facebook. We strengthen
12 partnerships with youth, seniors, elected officials
13 and hard to reach communities by attending community
14 meetings, supporting local events, offering hundreds
15 of training sessions and ready New York presentations
16 and engaging with local and ethnic media outlets.
17 And our Community Emergency Response Team program
18 welcomes 79 new volunteers who now participate in
19 community preparedness events and support first
20 responders.

21 It is also our privilege to support other
22 jurisdictions recovering from emergencies. NYCEM
23 manages New York Task Force 1, one of 28 taskforces
24 across the country that make up the FEMA National
25 Urban Search and Rescue USAR Response System. The

1 task force is comprised of NYCEM, NYPD, and FDNY
2 personnel who are fully trained and equipped to
3 respond to natural, technological and human caused
4 disasters.
5

6 In 2024, New York Task Force 1 deployed to two
7 incidents, in September, 46 people and two canines
8 from New York Task Fore 1 deployed to North Carolina
9 following Hurricane Helene. The team conducted
10 extensive searches of areas impacted by
11 infrastructure collapse down trees, mudslides and
12 heavy flooding. In October, 81 personnel and four
13 canines from New York Task Force One deployed to
14 Orlando following Hurricane Milton. The team
15 assisted searching for survivors in collapsed
16 buildings providing emergency medical care and
17 conducting water rescues.

18 We are also innovators in leveraging the latest
19 technologies to enhance emergency preparedness
20 priorities, preparedness and response. In
21 collaboration with the Drone Task Force, NYCEM
22 deployed drones to monitor shark activity on city
23 beaches during the summer, culminating in a new shark
24 protocol. We initiated a pilot program to use
25 robotic devices to inspect infrastructure in

2 hazardous conditions such as compromised buildings.

3 NYCEM is also exploring how art generative artificial
4 intelligence tools can enhance preparedness, response
5 and recovery efforts.

6 NYCEM continues to coordinate the City's Recovery
7 Working Group, which focuses on new priorities,
8 including heat resiliency strategies and temporary
9 flood protection measures. In collaboration with the
10 Mayor's Office of Housing, Recovery Operations, NYCEM
11 facilitated a Post Disaster Hurricane Recovery Focus
12 Group to identify strategies for rapid post disaster
13 housing support. NYCEM connects city partners to
14 FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Funding, a critical
15 federal grant program focused on risk reduction and
16 provides the technical assistance needed to
17 successfully apply for these programs. This has
18 resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars in grant
19 awards to support projects that make our city better
20 prepared for future disasters. And this is just a
21 fraction of the work the New York City's Emergency
22 Managers do.

23 Before detailing our budget, I would be remiss if
24 I did not discuss some of the macro issues facing
25 emergency management at this time, particularly

2 funding. Federal grants make up the majority of
3 NYCEM's budget with 66 percent of our agencies
4 budgeted headcount supported by federal funds. Over
5 the last five years, we have seen cuts to these
6 federal grants nationally while also facing
7 reductions in funds. With falling funding and
8 growing costs due to inflation and other economic
9 factors, emergency managers across the country are
10 being asked to do more with less.

11 I cannot think of any more critical investment in
12 safeguarding New Yorkers during times of emergency
13 then in the people who manage those emergencies.
14 NYCEM staff are under compensated compared to peers
15 at similarly sized city agencies. NYCEM staff are
16 undercompensated compared to peers at similarly sized
17 city agencies and their compensation does not account
18 for the dual roles our staff must fulfill.

19 In addition to their day to day responsibilities,
20 staff rotate on 24/7 on call teams. Where they're
21 responsible for immediate coordination of a city's
22 response to an incident. This involves significant
23 off hours, weekends and holiday work that is
24 currently not accounted for in staff salaries. Our
25 team has developed a comprehensive salary

2 restructuring and advancement policy over the last
3 year, provide career pathways and ensure we retain
4 and grow the experience needed within the ranks of
5 New York City Emergency Management to prepare for,
6 respond to and recover from future emergencies facing
7 New Yorkers.

8 I also want to take a minute to address another
9 issue of pressing concern. The impacts of cuts to
10 federal spending and the federal workforce,
11 especially at FEMA and other federal agencies we
12 depend upon should not be underestimated.

13 Across the country, emergency management 101 is
14 that the local jurisdiction, whether a small town or
15 county, a large city like New York, or a state is in
16 charge of managing an incident. But once that
17 emergency exceeds their capabilities, they are able
18 to turn to the state and then the federal government
19 for support. Federal agencies provide unique
20 expertise and capabilities that support local
21 preparedness, response, recovery, surveillance and
22 mitigations. Agencies like the National Oceanic and
23 Atmospheric Administration NOAA, are an irreplaceable
24 partner for weather forecasting. The Centers for
25 Disease Control and Prevention, which conducts

2 national disease surveillance and the Federal
3 Communication Commission, which supports wireless
4 emergency alerts, just to name a few. We will need
5 to ensure that we properly prepare for and manage the
6 consequences of emergencies in the absence of the
7 fully capable federal agencies that have supported
8 emergency management efforts over the past several
9 decades.

10 Historically, when an incident occurs that
11 exceeds local or state resources, the federal
12 government will involve all necessary department and
13 agency capabilities and organize the federal response
14 coordinated by FEMA. While all emergencies start and
15 end at the local level, federal agencies play a
16 dominant role in several disaster scenarios including
17 civil defense, nuclear accidents, extreme weather,
18 disease outbreaks, bioterrorism and counterterrorism.
19 But we are in the midst of a period of major change
20 for the US Emergency Management System and we must
21 prepare for a world where we cannot depend on the
22 historic structure of state and federal support that
23 exists before, during, or after emergencies. And I
24 want to be clear that this concern predates the
25 current administration. Over the last few years, New

2 York City and many other cities across the state and
3 country had to manage one of the largest humanitarian
4 crises largely on our own with little help from the
5 federal government.

6 So today, I'm announcing a 90-day process that
7 NYCEM will commence immediately to assess our risk as
8 we as a city can better understand what we will need
9 to do to mitigate and prepare for this new context.
10 NYCEM will use this process to outline solutions and
11 propose novel approaches to grow our local emergency
12 capacity. This will include working with regional
13 partners to private sector and the state to fill gaps
14 created by federal cuts to budgets workforce and the
15 agencies we depend upon. We will proactively develop
16 an emergency management system that will lead the
17 city's efforts to be better prepared for the
18 foreseeable and unknown threats that lie ahead.

19 With that said, let me now provide a snapshot of
20 our budget for the next fiscal year. Our projected
21 total fiscal year 2026 city tax levy expense budget
22 is \$79 million. We rely on our City Tax Levy Expense
23 Budget to support the agencies administrative,
24 technological and operational costs. The projected
25 fiscal year 2026 City Tax Levy Personnel Services

2 budget is \$12.9 million, which supports the 82
3 personnel lines paid directly through our tax levy
4 funds. This includes \$1.2 million in funding for 16
5 staff members dedicated to working on increasing
6 communication and services to people with
7 disabilities, access and functional needs.

8 Our projected Fiscal Year 2026, Other Than
9 Personnel Services budget is \$66 million, which
10 includes \$44.5 million for the agencies asylum
11 operations. The remaining \$21.5 million covers all
12 agency operating at administrative costs. This
13 budget includes a significant portion of
14 nondiscretionary funding. These funds are designated
15 to cover our warehouse lease, utilities and
16 telecommunication costs, including the maintenance
17 and operations of our emergency operation center and
18 our backup facilities. This money also supports our
19 fleet and all additional equipment, supplies and
20 material needed to run the agency.

21 I would like to close by expressing my admiration
22 for our dedicated emergency managers who in addition
23 to their day to day roles are also responsible for
24 immediately coordinating the city's response to an
25 incident. They accomplish both roles with exemplary

2 professionalism and service to their city. I'm
3 honored to lead this agency and I know that the
4 expert team at New York City Emergency Management
5 will continue to set the model for what emergency
6 management should be.

7 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.
8 I look forward to working with the Council and we are
9 happy to take your questions. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much for your
11 testimony Commissioner and it is always a pleasure to
12 see you and your Deputy Commissioner and your Chief
13 Financial Officer. I will just ask my colleagues if
14 they have any questions at this time.

15 Because you touched on the federal government and
16 we have a new Administration and I appreciate you
17 saying that a lot of your cuts had come before this
18 Administration. What steps have NYCEM taken to
19 prepare for the possibility of losing federal funds
20 and do you have alternative funding that you're
21 seeking in the event?

22 ZACH ISCOL: Yeah thank you for your question.
23 So, we have seen this reduction in federal funds over
24 the last number of years and Chris can talk a little
25 bit more about it but after 911, the federal

2 government set up a program, the Urban Area Security
3 Initiative which is a grant program that is
4 responsible for two-thirds of our federal - of our
5 agencies funding. That funding over the last number
6 of years has been diluted as more and more
7 jurisdictions tap into those federal funds. So, this
8 is not something that is new, although there are
9 significant changes that possibly could be occurring
10 with this new administration. They're looking at
11 revamping FEMA, possibly doing away with FEMA. There
12 are cuts being made to some of these agencies that we
13 depend upon for disease surveillance, weather
14 forecasting, communications. So one of the things
15 that we're doing now as I mentioned in my testimony
16 is we're launching a 90 day review starting today.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Excellent.

18 ZACH ISCOL: To look at how can the city, the
19 region, our private sector, our partners with the
20 state, the authorities, our sister agencies, how can
21 we fill those gaps in this new normal to make sure
22 that we are there for New Yorkers?

23 So, not the best answer for your question other
24 than say, we'd love to work with you over the next 90
25

2 days and certainly come back and brief you on those
3 recommendations for what we can do going forward.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I think it's commendable
5 that you even have that in place. I think that's
6 great because we don't know what the future holds but
7 you're preparing for it and that's good and I always
8 that you know NYCEM is a little agency that has a
9 really big job and you do your job. So, we really
10 appreciate it and you've been working outside of your
11 general mission for a very long time and you did an
12 incredible job with that mission and I am glad to see
13 that you're back to emergency preparedness and doing
14 that the actual meeting for the NYCEM is.

15 So, we have spoken about emergency shelters.
16 We've spoken about evacuation, you know routes and
17 things of that nature and I just want to touch on
18 because obviously my district is, the majority of it
19 is an evacuation route and a lot of the districts
20 that were not normally throughout the city have now
21 become an evacuation route.

22 So, what planning have you done for areas like
23 that? Where you'll need places for people to go for
24 a short period of time before they can get back into
25 their homes?

2 ZACH ISCOL: Yeah, so our most comprehensive plan
3 that the city - you know we have hundreds of plans
4 for the city and one of things that Christina just
5 spearheaded is an amazing revamp of how we do all
6 hazards management. So that we're not just prepared
7 for events that we know are likely to occur but also
8 any type of hazard that could impact the city, even
9 those that are unforeseen.

10 Specifically as it relates to coastal storm
11 evacuation and the underlying areas, there's been a
12 lot of work that we as an agency in the city has done
13 post Hurricane Sandy to revamp our coastal storm
14 plan. Looking at our sheltering operations, making
15 sure that they are accessible and certainly revamping
16 the way that we do the hurricane evacuation zones and
17 there's a lot of public communication that we do
18 throughout the year, especially leading into
19 hurricane season to make sure that residents are
20 aware of the zones. That they are capped into the
21 proper communication channels, and that we are
22 working the timelines to make sure that we are safely
23 able to evacuate those areas should the need arise.

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Most of our questions were
25 on like outreach and such and you really answered it

2 comprehensively in your testimony and I was one of
3 the people who received the notification via mail you
4 know to join you know the ex, you know NYC, Notify
5 NYC, which I was already a member of. But so I think
6 that a lot of the questions were answered in your
7 testimony and I really do appreciate that because
8 public awareness is something that everyone always
9 talks about. We don't have enough public awareness
10 but honestly sometimes people you know, I can send
11 out a notification you know in various ways and then
12 people say, geez I had no idea you were having that
13 concert. Why didn't you tell me? You know so I get
14 your - I understand your task at hand.

15 In areas that are vulnerable to these types of
16 flooding, like normally, we're not talking about
17 flash flooding or anything but just what are specific
18 steps that you're taking to assess and mitigate
19 vulnerabilities in these areas? Especially where
20 there are subway systems or areas that are transit
21 deserts. You know we have in my district right now,
22 the A-line to Rockaway is ended because they're
23 redoing the tracks. So, that leaves one less way to
24 get off the Peninsula so transportation is a problem
25 and so, I know you're aware of it and I know that

2 you've thought about how are we getting everybody off
3 the peninsula. So, just if you could give us an
4 overview of by the city you know, by boroughs, what
5 do you have in plan to get people from an area that
6 was flooded to a place that is safe?

7 ZACH ISCOL: Yeah, that's a great question and I
8 know that you know this better than anybody. You and
9 I, I can't count the number of times -

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah, we've been up to our
11 knees in water. I get it.

12 ZACH ISCOL: That's being generous. Up to our
13 waist in water together, canvassing, making sure
14 residents are okay together more than a few times.
15 So, different parts of the city are susceptible to
16 different types of flooding. The coastal areas of
17 the Rockaways in particular, parts of Staten Island,
18 lower Manhattan, Brooklyn, we are a coastal city.
19 Those are susceptible to stormwater, coastal storm
20 flooding, right. That is water that comes into
21 Jamaica Bay, into New York Harbor.

22 We're pretty good at both forecasting and
23 understanding where that water is going to go and
24 what areas are susceptible of flooding and we have
25 some lead time in those cases to communicate to the

2 public who live in those areas. To work with
3 different organizations that serve in particular
4 vulnerable populations, people with disabilities and
5 functional needs to be able to move them out.
6 Working with our partners at the MTA. Working with
7 different transportation groups that can support
8 people with disabilities and functional needs in
9 particular and to give people the time they need to
10 move out of those areas and into our shelter systems.

11 I think the bigger concern right now or another
12 concern is the areas outside of the coastal storms
13 that are susceptible to flooding due to rainfall.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Right.

15 ZACH ISCOL: That is much harder to predict. It
16 is much harder to forecast. We might know that we're
17 looking at moderate to extreme rainfall somewhere
18 across the city but knowing exactly where those storm
19 cells are going to line up. If they're lining up
20 over areas that are susceptible or less susceptible
21 to flooding, that is very, very difficult to forecast
22 ahead of time. And generally, you may not even know
23 that there is the concern of a flash flood until
24 you're maybe a few hours away.

2 And so, one of the things that we're doing is
3 really working very closely to educate the public.
4 Making sure that they know that when a watch is
5 issued, that they need to start preparing to act.
6 When a warning is issued, they need to act.
7 Providing them in our communication, letting them
8 know that there are places that they can go that are
9 city run that are safe shelters at least for
10 temporary periods of times. If you live in a
11 basement below grade apartment some place that is
12 more vulnerable, but a lot of it in those cases is
13 really around the public communication. Christina,
14 to you have anything that you would want to add to
15 that?

16 CHRISTINA FARRELL: Yeah, I would just say and I
17 know that you're aware of this but we also after
18 Hurricane Ida set up a basement apartment
19 notification group and you know one thing as
20 technology has evolved, notify first came to be in
21 2009. You know people have gotten away from phone
22 calls and they've gotten into text and emails and you
23 know notifications on social media but for most
24 people, that isn't going to wake you up in the middle
25 of the night. That's not going to get your attention

2 in the way that may be needed. So, this space and
3 group that we are you know working on in very
4 specific districts, it's phone calls. So, it could
5 be a landline, it could be your cellphone, it could
6 be however you would get a phone call but that's the
7 difference. So, it will be intentionally disruptive
8 to wake people up because as Zach said, it could be a
9 couple hours or you know it could be a lot quicker.
10 But as we get into coastal storm season and you know
11 looking at other heat season and things we do,
12 continue to push and look at different ways to use
13 Notify to the best of our ability.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you.

15 ZACH ISCOL: And just wanting to add, I think you
16 know as we are going into our coastal storm season
17 prep, one of the issues that you just flagged in
18 regards to the MTA and the subway shutdown out on the
19 Rockaways, that is something that we'll be working
20 very closely with to make sure that we have
21 contingencies in place.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Right, yes, definitely and I
23 know that this doesn't come under your purview but in
24 those coastal areas, where we see walls are kind of
25 falling apart and things like that. How does NYCEM

2 coordinate with agencies like DEP and DOT and the
3 DOB, especially now with the City of Yes, where there
4 will be more basement apartments that are you know
5 utilized because they're in zones where it's legal
6 and ADU's where they're legal. You know this just
7 puts just another layer of what you need to know and
8 how you need to mitigate and where you need to notify
9 and or remove people for their safety.

10 ZACH ISCOL: So, we do work with them in a couple
11 of different ways. So, number one is, we managed a
12 process to develop the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan,
13 which is a federal requirement to make us eligible to
14 federal funding. That plan accounts for many of
15 these different hazards that we need to deal with and
16 we also look at a lot of the data and look at what
17 are some of the tools and things we can do to
18 mitigate those types of hazards across the city. And
19 that is updated very regularly.

20 One of the things we're looking at putting into
21 it for example is wildfires in the next addition of
22 the Hazard Mitigation Plan. I think in addition to
23 that, our agency provides a lot of technical
24 assistance to agencies in order to apply for federal
25

2 grants and other types of funding, specifically
3 related to those types of issues.

4 And so, we not only do the risk analysis with the
5 Hazard Mitigation Plan but then we work very, very
6 closely with the agencies to make sure that they have
7 the resources in order to actually address them
8 properly.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I'm actually glad to hear
10 though you're getting involved in the wild fire issue
11 because we saw some wildfires that we never did
12 before and we spoke about it with the last panel and
13 I think that FDNY could be helpful with their water
14 trucks to get out there and kind of when the ground
15 is as dry because we have drought just to temper down
16 and water that area you know in the park, at Forest
17 Park in my district and I know the Parks Department
18 goes out there and you know waters just the ground
19 regularly so that there aren't any fires. You know
20 so Parks Department - this really is - like it's
21 almost every agency in the city that you're going to
22 have to work with for these types of brush fires and
23 they're very dangerous.

24 So, I appreciate that you already have that in
25 effect and do you know, it's DEP I understand that

2 with the rain gardens and stuff like that but do you
3 have any input as to where they go or where do you
4 think they're needed? Do you have those
5 conversations with DEP?

6 ZACH ISCOL: Yeah, we work very closely with DEP
7 on that as well as the Mayor's Office for Climate
8 MOCJ.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay, great. And I think
10 you have answered all of my questions and I don't see
11 any other members here. So, I'd just like to say
12 thank you. Thank you for always being honest. Thank
13 you for always being available and from someone who
14 comes from a flood zone, thank you for being on the
15 ground with me and you know you have a great team in
16 place and now - oh, I do want to ask you this. Were
17 you given, when you were doing the work you know with
18 the intake centers, you had gotten more people, more
19 lines of people for NYCEM or you were working with
20 the same budgeted lines?

21 ZACH ISCOL: We had I think one additional person
22 but to be fair, we brought in a number of great
23 contractors and consultants who were managing that
24 with us. So, initially and this is something that we
25 sort of normally do as we're managing emergencies is

2 our team really in the early days was managing
3 everything and then over time we displaced them with
4 consultants and contractors that we managed and they
5 became a core part of our asylum seeker operations.
6 You want to add something?

7 CHRISTINA FARRELL: Yeah, I just wanted to add
8 that we did - we were able to bring on one additional
9 person but we also for our different units, any time
10 we have an emergency like that and something that
11 goes over so long, we're able to work in a lot of our
12 planning assumptions. So, for example, we had only
13 used our stockpile, our emergency supply stockpile
14 before for hurricanes but we started using it for the
15 respite sites, for shelters, for other things. We
16 also used - I surged staffing models, so we had city
17 staff that might have spoken specific languages, may
18 have mental health training or other things that
19 could come and work. So, you know it's been 12 years
20 since Hurricane Sandy but over the last couple years
21 one of the silver linings of all the work that we did
22 with asylum seekers is that we got to rotate our
23 stockpile but also see how we could do resupply and
24 everything in a very systematic way. We also work
25 through staffing challenges. We got some language

2 capability that we didn't have before. So, right now
3 as we start - as we sunset our asylum seeker
4 operations, we are looking at what we learned. Like
5 Zach said, the different ways that we brought in
6 contractors, so uhm you know if the next big event is
7 a hurricane or a citywide blackout or something else
8 that he talked about in his testimony, we can use
9 these lessons learned from the last two years in
10 asylum seekers.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay and is there in this
12 fiscal year, what would you say is your projected
13 budgetary ask?

14 ZACH ISCOL: Specifically related to asylum
15 seekers or overall?

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: No, no, overall.

17 ZACH ISCOL: Chris, do you want to go into the
18 numbers for our process here?

19 CHRISOPHER BLANCO: Sure. So I can give you an
20 overview of some of our primary requests for new
21 needs. All these are really related to structural
22 underfunding and so, I'll break it down by PS OTPS
23 and capital needs.

24 So, as alluded to in the Commissioners testimony,
25 most of our needs are PS related. Obviously we've

2 gone through several rounds of PEGs, as all agencies
3 have due to the asylum seekers impact on the budget
4 and other economic factors. So, I think number one,
5 we're requesting \$2.9 million in the baseline to fund
6 the reduction in - to offset the federal reduction in
7 funding as we discussed. Over the last five years,
8 we've seen about a 20 percent reduction in the
9 overall allocation of homeland security funding to
10 the City of New York. NYCEM has seen a much smaller
11 reduction but as a result, we're scheduled to lose
12 ten heads beginning next fiscal year and looking to
13 hope to sort of make that restored in the baseline.

14 Additionally, we're requesting an additional \$1.9
15 million in the baseline related to shifting
16 additional heads off of the volatile federal grants
17 given just a bigger picture discussions around
18 federal funding. Also as mentioned in the testimony,
19 we're looking at \$1.5 million in the baseline tied to
20 reformulated agency salary restructure, just to bring
21 our staff inline with other federal - excuse me, with
22 other city agencies and ensure parity across the city
23 as well as create more career pathways for folks
24 since we're a nonunion agency.

2 And then also looking just at a \$3.3 million
3 overall structural deficit and this is due again to
4 various PEGs that have happened over the years and
5 essentially what that means is, we don't have enough
6 funding to hire up to our budgeted headcount. So,
7 this funding, we restore that to allow us to get to
8 the full levels of staffing that we have in the
9 budget.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: What is your full budgeted
11 headcount?

12 CHRISTOPHER BLANCO: We have 242 heads across the
13 entire agency. As we mentioned, 160 of those are
14 grant funded, so the math in that is about 82 city
15 funds.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Gotcha, okay, thank you.

17 CHRISTOPHER BLANCO: And then just OTPS quickly,
18 \$477,000 for critical software and license needs
19 across the city. \$300,000 for vehicle maintenance.
20 Our entire vehicle budget and equipment, maintenance
21 budget was zeroed out through previous PEGs and we've
22 been self-funding that with surpluses elsewhere and
23 then finally on the capital side, we put in a \$9.1
24 million request to upgrade our radio systems just due
25 to sort of outdated nature, things of having to

2 upgrade those systems to be in line with NYPD's new
3 requirements around encryption. We've gotten verbal
4 commitment from OMB on that one, so we're currently
5 working through with DCAS who funds our capital
6 projects. And then finally, a \$2 million ask to
7 build out the Queens Borough office. We received an
8 approximately \$1 million from Congressman Swasey to
9 build a site in Fort Totten Park in Queens.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Oh nice, great. Okay,
11 anything that you need from us? From me, to be
12 helpful to get those asks realized? Please don't
13 hesitate to loop us in.

14 ZACH ISCOL: We will for sure and I think that
15 the one sort of thing I would underline in that is
16 that our - you know and I've said this in my
17 testimony but the people who work at our agency are
18 our most important investment and I think as Chris
19 just said, you know we are not unionized and we don't
20 have many civil service at our agency. And I think
21 what that means is that when you were thinking about
22 coming to Emergency Management for a career, unlike
23 agencies also just because of the diversity of jobs
24 that our people fill. We're a small agency as you
25 said. We're the little engine that could but when

2 you think about career pathways, it's really, really
3 important for us that the people that we have at this
4 agency know what a career looks like in emergency
5 management because you don't want to lose that
6 experience. You want to see people grow. You want
7 to see them flourish and I think that ensures that we
8 have a really strong foundation. It's something that
9 Christina and I think about all the time. We have a
10 bias for promoting internally and filling more senior
11 positions. Right now 100 percent of our executive
12 staff positions are filled, which is fantastic but I
13 think in some of those budget lines, we're really
14 looking to help improve salary equity with our sister
15 agencies and ensuring that there are real career
16 pathways for folks at Emergency Management. I think
17 that is probably the greatest investment that the
18 city could make in Emergency Management.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I couldn't agree more. I
20 thank you so much for your testimony and I don't want
21 to see big flood come but come on out to the district
22 anytime.

23 ZACH ISCOL: That's part of it is I know I'm
24 going to see you out there.

25 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: You know it.

2 ZACH ISCOL: I know I will see you out there.

3 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thanks so much for coming.

4 I appreciate it.

5 I'm just going to pause for three to five
6 minutes. [02:51:22]- [03:02:06]. I'd just like to
7 make an announcement, although our public testimony
8 is not supposed to begin until 2:30, because the
9 hearing ended sooner and you are here in present, I
10 don't want to have you have a misuse of your time,
11 therefore we will take public testimony now for the
12 people who are present and then take a break to the
13 people who are joining at 2:30.

14 So, I just need to read. I now open the hearing
15 for public testimony. I remind members of the public
16 that this is a government proceeding and that decorum
17 shall be observed at all times. As such, members of
18 the public shall remain silent at all times. The
19 witness table is reserved for people who wish to
20 testify. No video recording or photography is
21 allowed from the witness table. Further, members of
22 the public may not present audio or video recordings
23 as testimony but may submit transcripts of such
24 recordings to the Sergeants at Arms for inclusion in
25 the hearing record. If you wish to speak at today's

2 hearing, please fill out an appearance card with the
3 Sergeants at Arms and wait to be recognized. When
4 recognized, you will have two minutes to speak on
5 today's hearing topic. The budget for the Fire
6 Department and for New York City Emergency
7 Management.

8 If you have a written statement or additional
9 written testimony you wish to submit for the record,
10 please provide a copy of that testimony to the
11 Sergeant at Arms. You may also email written
12 testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72
13 hours of the close of this hearing. Audio and video
14 recordings will not be accepted. For in person
15 panelists, please come up to the table once your name
16 has been called. And I will now read the names of
17 the people who are in the first panel. Sharon Brown,
18 Christopher Leon Johnson, Sakeena Trice, Michael J.
19 Northmore, Nancy Carbone, Michael Tracey.

20 Although they may not be in the room right now,
21 they will be given a chance to testify at 2:30 if
22 they return. So, please, we'd love to hear your
23 testimony.

24 SHARON BROWN: Hello, my name is Sharon. Before
25 I begin, release the hostages, let Yawas people go.

2 Defend Israel and happy Purim to everyone whose
3 Jewish.

4 It's paramount to have funding for the FDNY and
5 the EMS in excess of \$1 billion for both \$1 billion
6 is not enough. Since it's a combined unit, EMS and
7 separately FDNY combined. Previously the police
8 officers, they were going to get \$1 billion. So, if
9 you have two agencies FDNY and EMS, \$1 billion would
10 not be enough for two agencies and getting new
11 vehicles and different things like that. That's not
12 going to make it \$1 billion.

13 They must prepare for terror attacks major and
14 they also - we don't expect it but we have to prepare
15 for it and they must expect minor terror
16 encouragements also. So they need funding in excess
17 of \$1 billion. The man cover situation and fire
18 cannot happen. We need training for disaster
19 situations above the norm. So we see tings like the
20 man cover situation and we know Con Ed needs to
21 coordinate with the FDNY, EMS and also with NYPD and
22 they need to check on every man cover hole within and
23 without to find out what's going on under there.
24 They need to also check balconies, the
25 infrastructure, roads and bridges. Balconies over

2 the past couple of decades, they have been coming
3 loose and things like that, so the infrastructures
4 and things, roads and bridges need to be checked on.
5 Emergency Management funding has to exceed what EMS
6 and FDNY and NYPD get.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much for your
8 testimony.

9 SHARON BROWN: You're welcome.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Ma'am.

11 SAKEENA TRICE: Good afternoon. My name is
12 Sakeena Trice. I am a Senior Staff Attorney with the
13 Disability Justice Program at New York Lawyers for
14 the Public Interest. Thank you for the opportunity
15 to present testimony today on behalf of NYLPI. NYLPI
16 is deeply concerned about the city's practices
17 relating to the involuntary removal of individuals
18 who have mental illness diagnosis or psychiatric
19 evaluation. Additionally NYLPI urges the City
20 Council to mandate significant changes into the
21 Behavioral Health Emergency Assistance Response
22 Division Program, as it is a deeply flawed pilot
23 which merely proports to be a nonpolice response to
24 people experiencing this with health crisis but
25 instead it is part of a long tradition of policing,

2 criminalizing and under and mis serving people with
3 mental disabilities.

4 Funding be heard in its heard and its current
5 diverse money from what we need, a true nonpolice
6 crisis response system that dispatches the team of
7 peers. There must be changes to be heard and both
8 changes include using emergency medical technicians
9 who are not city employees. 24/7 operating hours,
10 calls routed through 988 and above all, Be Heard must
11 prioritize the self-termination of people with
12 disabilities. People in crisis are calling for help
13 and being met by police and EMT's who send them to
14 the hospital without asking question or providing
15 onsite treatment and they send them to the hospital
16 against their will. New York City must create and
17 invest in a mental health care system that offers
18 truly voluntary services that are community based and
19 evidence based and culturally competent. There is no
20 hard evidence that shows that involuntary commitment
21 is more effective than voluntary treatment, so we
22 must invest in voluntary services to save lives.

23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you very much. Mr.
25 Gorman.

2 JOE GORMAN: Good afternoon. My name is Joe
3 Gorman and I am the son of a retired FDNY Captain.
4 I'm also proud to work for Friends of Firefighters.
5 An organization founded with the mission of
6 supporting New York City's bravest. In the aftermath
7 of 911, our founder Nancy Carbone established this
8 organization upon witnessing first-hand the immense
9 emotional and mental toll of our city fire fighters.
10 Since then we've remained steadfast in our mission,
11 providing free, independent and culturally competent
12 mental health support to active and retired FDNY fire
13 fighters and their families. New York City fire
14 fighters confront some of the most harrowing
15 emergencies facing trauma and life threatening
16 conditions daily.

17 A recent survey conducted by SUNY New Paltz
18 revealed that more than 68 percent of first
19 responders have experienced stress while 53 percent
20 reported that they have experienced symptoms of
21 depression. Burnout and anxiety among other mental
22 health challenges identified by the respondents and
23 38 percent reported to have symptoms of post-
24 traumatic stress disorder. Sadly, the suicide rate
25

2 among firefighters is higher than that of the rate of
3 the general public.

4 80 percent of respondents said the stigma
5 associated with mental health is an obstacle to
6 seeking assistance. Culturally competent mental
7 health resources remain scarce, and traditional
8 employee assistance programs often fail to meet the
9 first responders' unique needs.

10 Counseling is the foundation of our work,
11 providing firefighters and their families with
12 critical, confidential support free of charge.
13 Because we do not accept insurance, our clients face
14 no session on caps, no limitations on frequency and
15 no restrictions on session lengths, ensuring they
16 receive the care that they need when they need it and
17 however they want it. Our clinicians at Friends of
18 Firefighters are seasoned therapists with diverse
19 backgrounds, all of whom have a deep understanding of
20 the firefighter community and its values. They
21 employ a variety of evidence based approaches and
22 tailored methods that allow us to address a broad
23 spectrum of firefighting specific mental health
24 challenges.

2 Today, I am here because we are at a critical
3 point. The demand for our services has surged,
4 nearly tripling since 2018. Last year alone, we
5 provided nearly 4,500 counseling sessions, yet our
6 fundraising efforts have not kept pace. Friends of
7 Firefighters respects \$633,000 to cover the cost
8 necessary to deliver direct services and conduct
9 critical outreach to the New York City fire fighters
10 and their families. Thank you to the Chair for your
11 continued and unwavering support and thank you to the
12 Committee for their consideration.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you for your
14 testimony. On Zoom, I'd like to call upon Tyler
15 Weaver.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

17 TYLER WEAVER: Okay can you hear me?

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yes sir.

19 TYLER WEAVER: Okay great. Hi, good afternoon.
20 My name is Tyler Weaver. Before I begin I'd just
21 like to quickly thank Committee Chair Joann Ariola,
22 her staff and the other Committee Members for the
23 attention they bring to FDNY issues that are of
24 importance to everyone in New York City. I also want
25 to acknowledge the very hard work that the fire

2 fighters and EMS personnel perform every day to keep
3 the city safe.

4 When it comes to the 2026 budget, I believe some
5 additional funding is going to be required to address
6 the issue of the high response times for EMS. As the
7 Committee Members already know these long response
8 times impacted my family in December 2023 when our
9 son Nicolas suffered a cardiac arrest in the Bronx
10 and waited 19 minutes for an ambulance.

11 While that event is just a single data point, New
12 York City's Local Law 119 official data on emergency
13 response show that advance life support ambulances in
14 the Bronx, every month since the end of 2023 are
15 taking more than ten minutes to arrive, 75 percent of
16 the time.

17 If you do the math with about 48,000 ALS calls
18 per year in the Bronx, this means approximately
19 36,000 people in the Bronx each year are being forced
20 to wait long times for the highest level of EMS care,
21 which are the advanced life support units.

22 As the Committee report for today's meeting
23 indicates, EMS faces major issues with staffing and
24 this issue has been ongoing for years. When you dig
25 into the reasons why staffing is a problem, the same

2 answer keeps popping up mainly that EMS personnel in
3 New York City are underpaid and that this causes high
4 turnover and difficulty in attracting and keeping the
5 proper amount of people needed to staff units at the
6 correct level. When one considers that an even
7 higher number of EMS staff and ambulances would
8 actually be needed to start bringing down the high
9 response times, it ought to be clear that EMS funding
10 and resources needs to be higher than the preliminary
11 budget proposes.

12 Previous years Mayor Management reports indicated
13 that in the past, 25 percent of cardiac arrests were
14 able to be taken to the hospital with the return of
15 their -

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired. Thank
17 you.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I do have a question for you
19 Mr. Weaver. So, I don't know if you were watching
20 the hearing but I did bring up and again I want to
21 give you my deepest condolences. Your son is an
22 example, a poor example of what's happening and I
23 think that your insight into you know what needed to
24 be changed and talking about pay parity and the
25 amount of vehicles that we have and the fact that

2 vehicles go out of - you know ambulances are out of
3 service because they're at a fire and they can't go
4 to you know a few blocks away just to address someone
5 who is critically, you know acutely sick and so,
6 we're addressing all those things. So, I'd like to
7 hear what more you have to say.

8 TYLER WEAVER: Okay yeah, I almost was able to
9 complete what I wanted to say here. Thank you. What
10 I was just going to say is that uhm in the past, you
11 know the Mayor's Management Report, we're showing
12 that 25 percent of cardiac arrests were able to be
13 taken to the hospital with their you know pulse
14 returned, but that number now has been lower at 20
15 percent. And if you do the math of 25,000 cardiac
16 arrests per year in New York City, this five percent
17 increase in poor outcomes, you know equals out to
18 about 1,200 more people, maybe just maybe might have
19 survived in the past when response times were better.

20 And in closing you know I just basically called
21 and said you can do even better and increase EMS
22 funding to the level actually required to enable them
23 to be staffed and resourced to allow EMS to arrive in
24 a timely manner at all life threatening incidences,
25 especially cardiac arrests. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I think we are -

3 TYLER WEAVER: If you have additional questions,
4 please let me know.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: No, no, I just want say that
6 I think that we were all on the same page with
7 everything that you said but we just have to make it
8 happen. We keep saying we need all the things that
9 you were talking about but we've not put them into
10 effect and I believe under this Commissioner, we will
11 put them into effect. So, thank you for your
12 testimony.

13 TYLER WEAVER: Oh you're very welcome and I just
14 wanted to say I was very encouraged to hear the words
15 from Commissioner Tucker earlier. It's great to see
16 that people are verbalizing that they know about the
17 issue and that they want to solve it. And that's
18 very encouraging to me as a parent of someone who
19 lost somebody. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much. Next up
21 is Christopher Leon Johnson.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

23 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: There I go. Yeah,
24 hello, my name is Christopher. Can you hear me?

25 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yes Christopher, I hear you.

2 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, yeah, hello my
3 name is Christopher Leon Johnson. I'm at a jury
4 house; I'm at an event for the UN CR 639 so I
5 couldn't be in person but I want to make sure that I
6 made this clear to people by this Committee that we
7 need proper e-bike regulations in the city. I'm
8 going to show you right now; I'm in front of a bike
9 lane and it's ridiculous. We need proper e-bike
10 regulation in the City of New York. Look at this,
11 look at this, look at this guys. Look at this. You
12 got a deliverista with no helmet and look at the
13 bike. It's crazy, I'm on 44th Street. We need real
14 regulations in the City of New York. We need pass
15 Intro. 606 because it will prevent stuff like this
16 from happening. Look at the e-bike, that's like a
17 time bomb. It needs to stop. We need Intro. 606 at
18 the same time, and the Central Workers Justice
19 Project gets a lot of money from the government from
20 discretionary funding. Why hasn't the emergency- the
21 OEM Commissioner Zach Iscol and the Fire
22 Commissioner, Mr. Robert Tucker had to have a meeting
23 with the [INAUDIBLE 03:17:16]. Why you got to have
24 one? Look at this. This is crazy. Like the City
25 Council needs to really help pass Intro. 606. At the

2 same time, Worker justice Project need to - look at
3 this. Worker Justice Project needs to crack down.
4 Like look at this. Look at this, this is crazy guys.
5 Like the Workers Justice Projects needs to start
6 cracking down and really start holding their own
7 people accountable for -

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah, Christopher.

9 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I appreciate all that you're
11 showing us; I really do but is there anything
12 specific -

13 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, I'm sorry. I'm
14 sorry.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: No, no it's okay. Is there
16 anything specific to the fire department or NYCEM
17 that you want to talk about? I mean I appreciate
18 your input.

19 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, yeah, yeah, okay
20 fine cool. Sorry about that, I'm sorry.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Don't be sorry.

22 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: So, the Fire
23 Department needs to sit down with the Workers Justice
24 project. The OBM needs to sit down -

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

2 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Workers Justice
3 Project and one more thing is keep that funding,
4 don't defund them and please watch Adrienne Adams
5 because she might retaliate against them for backing
6 up -

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much
8 Christopher. I appreciate your testimony.

9 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Thank you, thank you.
10 Sorry about that. Thank you, thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Those are the only members
12 of the public right now who are here to testify both
13 in person and on Zoom so we will take a break and
14 resume at 2:30 to hear anyone else who had registered
15 for that session. Thank you so much.

16 RECESS [03:18:48]- [04:13:59]

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Welcome back. We're still
18 part of the public testimony portion of the Committee
19 for Fire and Emergency Management, the Budgetary
20 Hearing and seeing no one has signed in on Zoom or is
21 here in person, I am noting that we are going to end
22 the meeting. If you have any testimony, you can
23 still submit it up to 72 hours. Thank you. [GAVEL]

24

25

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 April 5, 2025