

**STATEMENT OF DEPUTY CHIEF RICHARD NAPOLITANO
COMMANDING OFFICER COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION
NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY
REMOTE HEARING
SEPTEMBER 8, 2020**

Good morning Chair Holden, Chair Borelli and Members of the Council. I am Deputy Chief Richard Napolitano, the Commanding Officer of the Communications Division for the New York City Police Department (NYPD). I am joined today by the Managing Attorney of the Legislative Affairs Unit, Michael Clarke. On behalf of Police Commissioner Dermot Shea, I wish to thank the Council for the opportunity to comment on this important matter.

As Commanding Officer of the Communications Division at the NYPD, I oversee all of New York City's 911 call centers and dispatching operations. Our dedicated Police Communications Technicians ("PCT"- commonly known as 911 Operators and Police Dispatchers) are thoroughly trained on how to handle each and every one of the approximately 9 million 911 calls we receive each year with efficiency, precision and compassion. PCTs are often the unsung heroes of the law enforcement community, fielding thousands of calls a day from individuals of all walks of life who are often in the midst of the worst moments of their life.

PCTs are given thirteen ("13") weeks of initial training, with dispatchers receiving an additional seven ("7") weeks of training. PCTs also routinely receive in-service trainings. Training modules include use of the ICAD system, new code expansions, understanding routes, and updates on revised directives system-wide. Upon answering a call, the PCT determines the nature of the emergency and routes it to the proper dispatcher, either NYPD, Fire Department, or EMS, who then determines the appropriate responders for the incident and dispatches them to the scene.

As Tropical Storm Isaias bore down on New York City, we began to make plans to ensure that our call centers were properly staffed. Our experience with the worst storms since Hurricane Sandy indicated that increasing our staffing by 33% over a typical day tour would manage an expected potential increase in call volume.

On the day of the storm, I was monitoring the call volume as it progressed. At around 11:30 a.m. we noticed that 911 calls were spiking. In addition to the extra staff that we already had in place, we began taking people off other assignments to staff the stations. Between 12:30 and 1:00 p.m. we received 3,247 calls. By comparison, on Tuesday August 6, 2019, we received 673 calls between 12:30 and 1:00 p.m. The call volume continued to increase, peaking at 4,724 between 1:30 and 2:00 p.m. During this time, we doubled our typical staffing, connected training stations to the system, so that we had *all* available work stations staffed by PCTs taking phone calls. This is significant because no amount of additional staff could have reduced call intake times since every possible call intake station, including our terminals used for training new PCTs, were



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activated and being used to assist New Yorkers seeking emergency assistance. All told, we received 25,551 calls between noon and 4 p.m., which is more than we received during an average 24-hour period. We received more than 4 times as many calls than we did, on average, during the same time 4-hour time period in August of 2019. This was, by far, the highest call volume we have received since Hurricane Sandy hit New York City in 2012.

While the 911 system did not fail during the storm, the high call volume did strain the system. Of the 25,551 calls we received during this period, there was a delay in our ability to answer the significantly elevated influx of calls. Call volume slowly declined after the peak, though remaining above normal through the early evening. However, the increased staffing, utilization of all available call intake stations, and the slowly decreasing call volume prevented delays after 4:30 p.m.

The NYPD takes this solemn duty seriously to ensure a prompt and professional response to anyone and everyone contacting our emergency call center seeking assistance. We understand that every second counts in an emergency and therefore we do everything in our power to ensure that plans and protocols exist and are timely executed to address elevated call volume. This includes staying aware of potential heightened volume due to approaching weather events and staging our resources accordingly and quickly activating those resources as was done during this event.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to these critical issues and we look forward to answering any questions you may have.