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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY ON  
WINTER WEATHER PREPAREDNESS**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everyone. Well, we're here at New York City's newest salt shed. You know this has gotten a lot of attention – a lot of positive reviews; even got a very favorable architecture review in the New York Times. So, this is – Sanitation gets credit for being both very, very effective at keeping this city running, but also aesthetically pleasing at the same time.

The men and women of the Sanitation Department and all our agencies are getting ready right now. We're bracing for the first big storm of the winter. And I want to let all my fellow New Yorkers know that we are prepared, that the agencies here are ready for what's coming up ahead. I want to thank the commissioners, who you will hear from in a moment. I want to thank Harry Nespoli, President of the Uniformed Sanitation Men's Association for his leadership and this partnership in all we do to keep our streets clear, and to keep our city clean.

At this moment, on Thursday morning, the forecast is still unclear, but there's an increasing potential for a major winter storm this weekend. Latest forecast shows snow beginning early Saturday morning and continuing through Sunday. Now, I'll emphasize here, we've been through this together before – forecasts can change; they can go higher; they can go lower – earlier, later. So, we're going to constantly keep you updated, but right now, the forecast for New York City – snow begins in earnest early Saturday morning, continues through Sunday.

Currently, we're assuming eight to twelve inches of snow plus strong winds and possible coastal flooding. National Weather Service has issued a blizzard watch. We'll continue to closely monitor the situation, and we're conducting daily calls with the National Weather Service. And we're working very closely with all city agencies – already coordinating with state agencies, and with public and private partners who will be crucial for this response. The Sanitation Department is ready as always. Starting on Friday morning, tomorrow morning, the Department will deploy workers on two split shifts of 12 hours each. They'll be 2,300 workers per shift; 579 salt spreaders will be pre-deployed on Friday evening. And we have 303,000 tons of rock salt on hand. And you can see some of it right here. So, as you can see lots of salt ready to deal with this storm. 1,650 sanitation department vehicles will be fitted with plows and another 138 – excuse me, 135 plows will be available from the Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Transportation, Department of Parks. I have every confidence that the Department of Sanitation and all of its sister agencies are ready to handle this.

Now, remember, every New Yorker can help out as always. When the storm hits it is crucial for people to stay off the streets to the maximum extent possible. If you need to move around, use mass transit to the maximum extent possible. Be aware of the safety conditions that come with a storm. It's slippery outside, it can be dangerous, so we want people to be very cautious over the weekend. And we want people to know that if they're having a problem with heat and hot water – very, very important – if anyone's having a problem getting heat and hot water, of course, call the manager for your building, but if it isn't being addressed call 3-1-1. We want to get out to people quickly. We want to address these issues – get them the heat and hot water they need. The sooner we know the faster we can address the issue. 3-1-1 is where you call for things like that, but, obviously, if there are any real emergencies and if you see people in danger as the storm hits call 9-1-1.

I want to ask my fellow New Yorkers to please look out for your neighbors, particularly senior citizens and people who are disabled – look out for them, check in on them. Of course, we'll be doing a very intensive outreach effort on our streets through our Department of Homeless Services and the NYPD. Our HOME-STAT initiative is ramping up, so we continue to go out any night in particular where the temperature goes below 32 degrees, and we have our Cold Blue designation. We have a very comprehensive outreach effort to get people in who are on the streets. We'll keep giving you updates over the next 48 to 72 hours, but the bottom line here is: New Yorkers should be ready for a big storm this weekend, should make the precautions now, should plan on staying home as much as possible on Saturday and Sunday, taking it easy, staying out of harm's way, and as usual, staying off the roads to the maximum extent possible, so the good men and women of the Sanitation Department can keep our roads clear.

Just quickly in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

[...]

**Mayor:** Alright, we're going to take questions just on this topic. Go ahead.

**Question:** [Inaudible] exactly a year ago at this time, we're about 48-hours from the storm and your advice to New Yorkers was, if you do have to go around to use mass transit – and then of course, the governor shut down the subway system. Have you been reassured this time? Have spoken to the governor about the likelihood that that will happen again?

**Mayor:** I don't think we're in that situation right now. I'm going to be talking to the governor further about it. There's been a lot of conversation since last year between City Hall, the governor's office, MTA – I think we all learned some good lessons from that situation. I will say that everyone should remember the storm that was predicted at that point would have been one of the biggest blizzards in the history of this city, certainly, the recent history. It turned out to be very different because of it moved eastward – what happened in Boston, that same storm was, of course, overwhelming. So, the initial impulse that we were going to deal with something that might take extreme measures, wasn't wrong. The lack of coordination was a real problem and obviously, decisions should have been different. But this time there's going to be a lot more communication and coordination.

**Question:** What about coastal areas, you know, there's going to be high-tide, there's a full-moon [inaudible]. What's the concern there? What's being done?

**Mayor:** A real concern, obviously, about coastal flooding and that's another reason we want people to be very, very careful. First concern is for human life, so, we want people to take these warnings seriously – stay inside, not take risks. But, again, all of our capacity, all our agencies will be out – NYPD, FDNY, obviously will be on high alert and available to deal with any crisis that come up.

Does anyone what to add? Okay.

**Question:** [Inaudible].

**Mayor:** Did you hear that? Any sand bags or anything in terms of the coastal –

**Commissioner Calvin Dayton, Office of Emergency Management:** No. No.

**Mayor:** Not at this moment, no specific plan at this moment.

Any other questions on this right now? Forgive me, the glare – yes?

**Question:** Because of the possibility of whiteout conditions, why a travel advisory and not a travel ban? What's the distinction there?

**Mayor:** We need to know more before we get to the point of a travel ban. Again, last time we were looking down the barrel of what would have been one of the largest storms we had seen in decades and a massive amount of snow accumulation in a pretty short period of time – that was appropriate. One thing I think was the right call was the travel ban which allowed Sanitation to get out there and clear the streets – and one of the best barometers of whether something worked out is the voices of the people. And what I heard from many New Yorkers afterwards is even though it turned out the storm wasn't as bad as we expected, they really appreciated that the next day the streets were so extraordinarily clear. Sanitation was able to do that because they had the freedom to maneuver. They had open roads so they could get out there and plow properly and not have a lot of traffic in the way. So, there are some scenarios for a travel ban, we don't know enough yet to make that call. We have to see more about this storm before we make that decision. The advisory though, unquestionable. People should stay off the roads unless they really have to be on them.

**Question:** What should parents be thinking about as far as school on Monday?

**Mayor:** Good question. So, from what we know now, there is no impact on school on Friday. If this hits and has a big impact on Saturday, and we have it under control Sunday, then school will go ahead on Monday as planned, but it's something we're going to have to look at as we get closer. I think right now, I would assume school on Monday – now as you know, this is my first winter where I'm not a public school parent, so I don't have Dante encouraging a snow day – don't have the – he should have registered as a lobbyist because he certainly was advocating a position – but our hope is that school will be normal on Monday.

**Question:** Do you think that because this is the first storm – significant storm of the season – what would you say to people in terms, you know, we've had a pretty easy winter that they kind of forget –

**Mayor:** Yes, very good point. Yes, no complacency here. I agree. We've all been lulled asleep a bit by how warm a winter it's been. It's astounding to me that we're almost to February 1<sup>st</sup> before we had our first real snowstorm but – no, take this very, very seriously. This – we're giving people a clear warning early and this is something that did work last time – giving people now a couple of days to change their plans, to prepare. Anyone who has the illusion that they're going to be taking big trips on Saturday and Sunday, get that out of your mind. It's not happening. You know, lots of flights are going to be cancelled starting, I'm sure, on Friday around the country and cascading into Saturday. Travel on the roads is going to get harder and harder starting in other parts of the Eastern Seaboard on Friday, hitting us later that night or into Saturday morning. So, I think people need to take this very seriously and recognize that this is a real thing.

**Question:** Mayor, I just wanted to follow-up on an earlier question. So, when you do chat with the governor [inaudible] better notification –

**Mayor:** Yes, no, look, I think there's been good conversations. I want to emphasize this – I think everyone reflected upon last time and recognized that we need to do things differently going forward. And so, there's going to be a lot of conversation in the next 48-hours to get this one right. But based on the numbers we have now, I don't think this is a situation where the MTA would consider shutting down the system. There may be, for example, the above-ground subway tracks, there may be some adjustments, things like that. But the system, I don't expect a shut-down but I, certainly, look forward to having that conversation with the governor and the head of the MTA.

Any other questions? Yes.

**Question:** You said HOME-STAT [inaudible] how many people were brought or came in off the streets last night, the last several days?

**Mayor:** Now, I just was handed a note and let me see what the note is. The grand total over the last couple of weeks is 575 people on the Code Blue days – so, 575 have come in through our outreach efforts. Last night 75 – 74 were voluntary, one was involuntary.

Yes.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, I know you don't have to shovel anymore but do you go out and do a little bit of shoveling just to stay in practice?

**Mayor:** Yes – Catherine is offering to assign me something. Rich this is not working out. This question has caused a whole series of problems. I think that's going to be a part of my life in the future but right now, I'm happy to take a little break from it. I had – I had 30 or 40 years' experience at it.

Any other questions?

**Question:** Any thought about [inaudible] parking for Monday given the current forecast and then would that announcement be made early so people don't go out in the storm to move their cars?

**Mayor:** Very, very fair question. I can editorialize – based on what we know now, there's a good chance that alternate-side will be canceled for Monday but we need to get closer to know that. I think you're absolutely right that we want to give people as much lead-time as possible but, again, right now based on these numbers, you could see this get smaller – in that kind of scenario we might be able to have alternate-side on Monday which we certainly prefer to do but we'll make that decision as quickly as possible.

Last call, okay, thanks everyone.

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