



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS UPDATE ON LOWER MANHATTAN
CRANE COLLAPSE**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: I wanted to give everyone an update on this incident. We had a very serious incident this morning in Lower Manhattan. A crane collapsed along Worth Street between West Broadway and Church. We have one fatality – an individual who happened to be sitting in a parked car not associated with the work being done with the crane. We have three individuals with injuries; two serious, one minor none life-threatening as far as we know at this point. None of the workers who were working on the site were injured in the process. This type of crane is called a crawler crane. It was being moved into a secure position because the – by the manufacturer’s instructions as winds topped 20 miles an hour. But this particular company, the instructions were that the crane should be put in a secure position if the winds were approaching 25 miles per hour, as lower than the typical standard for cranes – but for this company that was there standard. So, in fact, they were in the process of securing the crane. They got to the work site this morning at 7, recognized the winds were in the 20 mile-an-hour plus range, and were proceeding to secure the crane – actually to bring it down to a safe and secure position when this incident occurred.

Our Department of Buildings personnel had been on the site yesterday to approve the next steps in the work on that building. They had inspected the crane yesterday morning at 6:20 am, and reviewed the work that was being done and had approved it. Again, this morning, in fact, no work was done on the site because the crew made the decision immediately to bring the crane down into the secure position. And this incident occurred, literally, as they were lowering the crane to secure it.

We have now some updates on what’s being done to secure the area and deal with the aftermath. Obviously, first and foremost, the human effect – our hearts go out to the families of the individual who’s been lost, and to all those who have been injured. We’re concerned, obviously, for everyone who lives and works in the area to make sure they’ll be safe. The immediate concern relates to the fact that there have been gas leaks as a result of this incident. FDNY and Con Ed have been sweeping all the related buildings along Worth Street constantly. So far, they have not detected the type of gas levels that give them additional fear of any further problems, but they are, literally, sweeping them every 15 minutes to check gas levels. There have not been larger evacuations, only those buildings that have been immediately affected – physically effected by the crane hitting them.

The fact is this is a very, very sad incident. We’ve lost a life, but if you go out there on the street as I did and see what happened here, thank God it was not worse. And, in fact, a crew was directing people away from Worth Street as the crane was being lowered. So that crew – those construction workers who in the normal course of their work, as they were lowering the crane, were in fact keeping people away from the site, and keeping traffic from proceeding down West Broadway. That is part of why this situation was not even worse.

As I said, FDNY continues sweeping the buildings and securing the situation on the streets along with Con Ed and Department of Buildings. Con Ed has turned off gas in most of the buildings as a precaution. And they will be able to resolve the gas leak issue by early afternoon as far as we know at this point.

In addition, we should assume for people who live or work along Worth Street between Hudson and Church that this area is going to be cut off – largely cut off or partially cut off for several days. We'll make every effort to accommodate people. There's going to be larger disruptions in the area between Canal on the south – excuse me, Canal on the north; Chambers on the south; Hudson on the west, and Broadway on the east. That box, we're going to see a lot of disruptions in the coming hours, and probably next few days as issues are resolved and addressed.

The number-1 train continues running, but is skipping two stops in the affected area. So, a number of measures have been taken to protect people and make sure that we can focus on the work of addressing the situation and getting things back to normal over the next few days, but it will certainly take several days – certainly no earlier than Monday possibly longer before we can get things back to normal in these immediate blocks.

In addition, we have taken the precaution – even though wind levels have not reached the level that normally would lead to a larger shutdown of cranes around the city – we're taking the precaution of doing that right now. So, this type of crane, again, is called a crawler crane. It is not the largest type of crane, which is called a tower crane, but the crawler cranes in this city that are registered with the Department of Buildings – 376 of them – all potentially active today, but not necessarily active – it all depends on the worksite. But we're instructing, right now, all 376 crawler cranes to be secured – whatever is the most secure position for them in a wind condition. They've all been ordered to be secured immediately. In addition, the 43 tower cranes, the larger cranes in the city, have all been ordered to go into a secure position immediately.

Those are some of the basic updates. Let me also tell you, throughout the morning we've been working here at the site with First Deputy Mayor Tony Shorris; our commissioner for Emergency Management Joe Esposito; our Buildings commissioner, Rick Chandler; from the Fire Department, First Deputy Commissioner Turner and Chief of Department Leonard; on the Police Department, Chief of Department O'Neill; and from Con Ed Richard Yako has been the senior Con Ed person on site. And all of those agencies, obviously, are closely coordinating.

I walked the length of the crane. You can see how powerful the damage was, but you can also see, again, that it was something of a miracle that there wasn't more impact, and thank God that that the impact on people wasn't worse because this an area that normally would have had a lot of people around it – rush hour in the morning – Lower Manhattan. But because, again, the crane was being lowered into the secure position and the construction workers were blocking off the area the danger to people on the street was lessened. And thank God we didn't have more injuries and we didn't lose more people. Just for your knowledge, we just checked the history; this is the first crane collapse in the city since 2008. A number of precautions were put in place. In fact, there were two major crane collapses in 2008. A number of precautions were put in place at that time that have been very effective in stopping this kind of problem. And in fact, those type of precautions were in place today, which is why this crane was being lowered into a secured position, but something went wrong in that process. There's going to be a full investigation to find out what went wrong, and, obviously, if it tells us anything that will lead to other changes going forward. Full police investigation underway; full Department of Buildings investigation underway – this is being treated as a scene where we want to get all the facts about what happened here before we can come to further judgement specifically about this incident and about any changes we may want to make as a result.

With that, unless any of my colleagues have anything to add, we will go to your questions.

Yes?

Question: Beyond the definition you just described of nothing since 2008 in terms of –

Mayor: Right.

Question: I mean there really has been an epidemic of crane accidents in the city over the past decade. What can you do to police this?

Mayor: I'm going to disagree with the term epidemic. There have been some very serious incidents and, again, I think my predecessor took some major steps after 2008 to change the way cranes were handled, and obviously those steps worked because here we are eight years later. It's a very painful day – I'm not going to minimize what's happened here. We have to figure out what happened. We have to make sure it doesn't happen again in the future. But I would say differently – we've had some real serious issues on construction sites that we are taking major steps to change and to address but that is different from what we've seen here. This is something that hasn't happened in almost a decade.

Question: People that were hurt, were they injured by falling debris or the actual crane itself and where were they located?

Mayor: I want to see if either Chief O'Neill – or who has the best sense of where each individual was.

Chief of Department James Leonard, FDNY: [Inaudible] –

Mayor: Go ahead, Chief Leonard

Chief Leonard: We have four total patients. One was the person who was killed upon impact and the other people were all hit by falling debris. So, they're sustained – as the mayor reported – non-life threatening injuries.

Question: Chief, can you tell us what type of project was going on? What was the construction –

Chief Leonard: I'll defer to Commissioner Chandler –

Commissioner Rick Chandler, Department of Buildings: So, the building where the crane was working was at 60 Hudson Street, which is the former Western Union building. We have to do further investigation about what kind of permits were happening but we do know that –

Unknown: Sir, can you speak up?

Commissioner Chandler: Sure. The work that was on-going was to replace generators and air conditioning equipment on the roof. So, we have full permits for the crane itself. We're further investigating what might have been required for the equipment that was being installed on the roof.

Question: What was the address?

Commissioner Chandler: 60 Hudson Street. The former Western Union building

Mayor: And tell us how long this sight had been active.

Commissioner Chandler: So, they've been up for about week. So, they put the crane up on January 30.

Question: People in the neighborhood say that they noticed a couple of days ago, that the crane appeared unstable toward the top that a cable appeared to have broken. Did the inspection yesterday indicate any sort of, loss of integrity or stability with that crane?

Commissioner Chandler: We're unaware of any complaints of that nature at all. Yesterday's inspection was on the ground, as they were putting an extension on the boom and it was successful.

Question: Chief, can you describe the damage to the other buildings when it fell or –

Commissioner Chandler: Sure. The other damage to the buildings was the parapets on two of the buildings next to the New York Law School. So, those are in danger of collapsing right now. So, we're quartering-off the street to a 50-foot collapse zone and we'll have sidewalk shed erected immediately so to minimize the disruption to those buildings.

Question: Can you explain the process of – when you see the [inaudible] secure?

Mayor: Do you take it down piece by piece, etcetera?

Commissioner Chandler: Sure, they'll take down the parapet. I think that's the only thing that was in danger of collapse right now. So, we'll have to determine what contractor will be in here but first things first is to get the sidewalk shed in.

Chief Leonard: We have removed parts – I'm sorry – we have removed parts of the parapets already. We sent our people up there in conjunction with the Building Department inspectors to make it partially safe right now but then Buildings will issue orders to have it professionally done.

Question: There's video of the crane being lowered. It's coming down and then all of a sudden it comes down quickly. Have you talk to the operator to see what exactly happened?

Chief O'Neill: The NYPD, in conjunction with the Department of Buildings is conducting investigation – our detective bureau is working with the DOB on this and we have – we're interviewing the crane operator right now.

Question: And what did he tell you?

Chief O'Neill: We're in the middle of the interview –

Question: And why would it be a police investigation?

Chief O'Neill: Just in case there's anything criminal because we have to consider all factors here.

Question: Chief, can you tell us about the victims? The deceased? The folks who are in the hospital? Their genders, their ages?

Commissioner Chandler: No, we'll release that later. We're in the middle of making notifications.

Question: [Inaudible] the length of the boom and the approximate weight of the boom [inaudible] crane and the boom itself?

Mayor: You want those? Yeah, yeah give him a sense –

Commissioner Chandler: So the boom length for this unit was 565-feet, so it's a very large crane, and it was approved, and it was submitted by an engineer, and it went over with my staff. So, that was approved for that. It's a capacity of 330-tons, so, it a very, very large crane, perfectly fine in the terms of the way it was engineered, but obviously it requires an investigation as to why this happened.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Hold on, hold on. Go ahead.

Question: When was the last –

Mayor: Say it again.

Question: You said the crane wasn't used yesterday because you guys were investigating –

Mayor: No, no, no, I'm sorry. Let me say it and then I want to make sure you hear it carefully. Yesterday, 6:20 am – Department of Buildings staffer on the site because the crane was going to be added to – there was an extension being added. The Department of Buildings does not allow that to happen until it is approved. So, I want to be very clear – when our crane operators set up at the beginning, they have to have the Department of Building's approval. When they change any of their protocol they have to have Department of Buildings approval. They're not allowed to act or do any work until the Department of Buildings is on-site and has approved it. That happened yesterday morning.

Question: So, when was the last time it was used?

Mayor: Well, it's after that, right?

Commissioner Chandler: I'm assuming it was used yesterday. We'll have to verify that. I'm not sure what work was done yesterday.

Mayor: But, again, no work was done this morning. Upon the arrival, the crews seeing that the wind-speeds were around 20 miles per hour and that their manufacturer requirement was that when it got to 25 to bring it down. They, literally, didn't even start work; they just started the immediate securing of the crane.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Hold on, go ahead.

Question: You said there was an extension added to it, so, how long was it before – did it mean that before it was less than the 565 –

Commissioner Chandler: Yea, it was less than 565. I can't tell you what the – how long the extension was but it was permitted to go to a maximum of 565 and this extension brought it to this length. But we can get you the details.

Mayor: But we can get you were it was before and after. Yes?

Question: Do you have any working theories on what happened? I know we're early in this –

Mayor: We don't – we don't want to offer anything hypothetical. We want to really check what happened here and get an answer.

Question: Mayor, are you concerned that, you know, with – there's been an increase or several notable construction deaths in the city lately or deaths of pedestrians on the street around construction sites. Are you worried that the pace of development in Manhattan is putting New Yorkers at risk?

Mayor: I'm worried that we've had several incidents that I think were avoidable. And, obviously, that first and foremost involves companies and how they have done their work. But we are adding a large number of inspectors. That was part of our last budget. We'll give you more details on that. And we're going to be very,

very stringent on this point. But that's a different issue than what we have here. I really want to separate the two pieces very, very sharply. So, I want people to hear me loud and clear – we've had some construction site incidents that are very troubling. We have more and more inspectors who are going to get on top of that. We're going to be very tough on those companies. This is a totally different matter. This was a company that was putting their crane into the secure position as we would have wanted them to, and that we inspected as recently as yesterday. So, this is an entirely different matter.

Question: Mayor, can you tell us who the company is?

Mayor: Hold on. We're going to be with you in a sec.

Go ahead – the company?

Commissioner Chandler: The company is called Galasso Trucking and Rigging.

Question: Can you spell that?

Commissioner Chandler: G-A-L-A-S-S-O.

Mayor: And the company that the crane?

Question: G-A-L-A-

Mayor: Galasso.

Commissioner Chandler: Galasso.

Mayor: And the crane?

Commissioner Chandler: Bay Crane Company is the owner.

Mayor: Bay Crane owns the crane; Galasso operates. Correct?

Commissioner Chandler: Yes.

Mayor: Okay. In the back?

Question: The crane – is it 330 tons the crane or it can handle loads up to 330 tons? And with the wet snow that we had today, is that another factor in safety and whether or not you have to bring it down because [inaudible]?

Commissioner Chandler: It's – the capacity off the crane is 330 tons, not the weight of the boom itself. I can't – I can't imagine the snow was a factor at all, but that will be considered under the investigation.

Mayor: Any other questions?

Question: Does this kind of a crane have an onboard computer? Would that be part an investigation?

Commissioner Chandler: It will be part of the investigation, and I'm not sure of the answer to your question.

Question: Where was the base of the crane located?

Commissioner Chandler: On Worth between Hudson and West Broadway.

Question: Is this what's referred to as a mobile crane or are mobile cranes smaller?

Commissioner Chandler: Yes, this is a mobile crane because it has a crawler on it. So, it can move.

Mayor: Okay. Last call – any other questions.

Question: Where was the victim sitting in the car?

Mayor: On the driver side I believe. We'll check that. [Inaudible] okay, hold on, hold on, hold on. The car was parked on Worth between Church and West Broadway. We can't – we need to get more detail to tell you exactly the individual was sitting.

In the back?

Question: So, there was an extension added to the boom today, is that correct?

Mayor: Yesterday, correct?

Commissioner Chandler: Yes, correct.

Question: This was the first time it had been elevated? Was it yesterday was the first time it was elevated?

Commissioner Chandler: No it had been doing work. They'd been putting loads up on the roof. And I don't have the details of how many or how often, but they had been working.

Mayor: Right. So, Rich, to the best of our understanding they had been doing work over the last few days. They were – hold on, folks. They were doing work over the last few days. They were then trying to do work that required reaching farther back on the roof or higher, and so they applied for an extension. They were granted an extension by Department of Buildings inspectors who were on the site yesterday at 6:20. And then we don't – we will find out whether they did some of that work yesterday. But again, this morning they did no work on the site. They were simply in the process of securing the crane.

Question: I have noticed that several vehicles that are on Worth Street look like city vehicles. Would this be like a city employee?

Mayor: We don't – I don't think we have the details yet to offer.

Chief O'Neill: We haven't made any family notifications yet.

Mayor: We need to get more information.

Question: Do you know what types of buildings were evacuated by the [inaudible]?

Mayor: I think everything's been commercial, right?

Unknown: Non-residential – non-residential.

Mayor: New York Law School and some other surrounding buildings, but nothing residential at this point – and again, ongoing sweeps by FDNY and Con Ed on the gas situation. So far, at least as of a few minutes ago, they had not found any gas issues in a building that would cause further evacuations, but that's going to be monitored constantly until the gas is cut off, which will be by the early afternoon.

Yes?

Question: So, what is the message for residents in the area that's impacted? How do they stay updated in terms of, you know, updates from Con Ed, updates from the city?

Mayor: We'll be putting out updates constantly, all the different ways we do it obviously, to the people of this city. I think folks who live and work in the immediate area should assume a disruption that will go through the weekend, I think, and into Monday, even potentially longer. Think better safe than sorry – people should assume several days of disruptions. We want to do this very carefully. We want to keep everyone safe. But if people need access to a building to get their belongings or for something urgent, they will be escorted by NYPD at the appropriate time and in a safe manner into a building.

Yes?

Question: The base of the crane was parked at what exact address?

Commissioner Chandler: The base of the crane was between West Broadway and Hudson – right in the mid-block on the north side on Worth – on the north side of the building on Worth Street.

Question: Can you tell us which building was damaged – the address of the building that had the parapets? It wasn't New York Law School, it was a different building?

Mayor: Well, the parapets –

Chief Leonard: [Inaudible] but there were four buildings sustained – four buildings sustained damage with the parapets. One of them, at least, was New York Law School. It was from the corner of Church moving west down the block, so it was the first four of buildings that are affected.

Mayor: Yeah. And one of them definitely was a New York Law School building.

Question: [Inaudible] pronounced dead on the scene?

Mayor: Yes.

Question: Where were the other three victims? Were they on the street or in a car?

Mayor: Again, we're going to get all those details as the investigation proceeds, but emphasizing that none of them, from what we know at this point, have life threatening injuries – two in serious condition, one with minor injuries.

Question: Mayor, I know it's early – this Galasso construction company – or maybe the commissioner knows – any violations? Have you had a chance to check their history yet to see?

Mayor: We can say initially, and commissioner you can step in, we, obviously, asked the same question this morning on both Galasso, which was operating the site and Bay Crane, which owns the crane – no recent negative activities. So, at this point, we believe that they have been doing their work effectively, but again, there will be a full investigation of everything that happened here.

Anything else? Last call.

Question: Can you explain why this might cause a gas leak?

Mayor: Just the sheer impact. Who wants to speak to that?

Chief Leonard: It's just the impact of this large crane – the impact of a large crane striking the ground also broke a water main too. So, the water main was contained. Con Ed is actively working on the gas leak.

Mayor: Con Ed.

Senior Specialist Richard Yako, Con Edison: We have our – good morning – we have our – our gas mains are underground, of course. Some of the pipes cannot withstand a tremendous impact like that. We're currently in the process of isolating that main. In the meantime, the Fire Department, Police Department, and Con Edison are scanning all the buildings constantly making sure that there is no gas leaks that could cause a problem inside the buildings. So, we're watching for that. We're meticulous about that. We're also watching our electric and steam is shutoff. I can assure you that Con Edison is using all its resources, assisting the Mayor's Office, to make sure everything is safe as far as the utilities are concerned.

Question: Can you say and spell your first and last name, and your title.

Senior Specialist Yako: Richard Yako, Y-A-K-O. I'm a senior specialist in the Emergency Response Group.

Mayor: Okay, last call. Any other questions?

Yes?

Question: Mayor, can you please [inaudible]?

Mayor: I don't have anything right now. We'll get you something later.

Anything else? Last call. Okay thanks, everyone.

We'll get you updates later.

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