

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#35-17

**NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT UNVEILS NEW HIGH WATER MARK SIGN IN HAMILTON BEACH TO PROMOTE PUBLIC AWARENESS ABOUT STORM SURGE RISK AS THE CITY HEADS INTO PEAK HURRICANE SEASON**

**August 1, 2017** — As New York City heads into peak hurricane season (August through October), the New York City Emergency Management Department and the NYC Department of Transportation today unveiled a new high water mark sign in Hamilton Beach, Queens, to promote public awareness about the dangers of coastal storms. The new sign was unveiled at the corner of Russell Street and 102nd Street in Queens.

“The high water mark signs are a strong reminder of the deadly dangers hurricanes can bring to coastal communities; as the sign indicates, water levels reached as high as eight feet in Hamilton Beach when Hurricane Sandy hit in 2012,” said **NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito**. “As the City heads into peak hurricane season, I urge New Yorkers to find out if you live in a hurricane evacuation zone and make a plan to keep your families and homes safe before an emergency.”

“With peak hurricane season’s arrival, education is key to helping New Yorkers stay out of harm’s way,” said **Nicole Garcia, NYC DOT Queens Borough Commissioner**. “This new sign is a vital addition to the Hamilton Beach neighborhood and translates important information quickly and concisely so residents can be vigilant and stay safe.”

“Superstorm Sandy devastated communities, especially in Queens and homes in Hamilton Beach, and the risks posed by future storms remain high,” said **Queens Borough President Melinda Katz**. “The high water mark sign is an important reminder of the dangers we still face and the need to always remain aware and prepared. It is also a powerful symbol of the work left to do to protect Queens from severe storms and climate change.”

“It has been almost five years since Superstorm Sandy struck the southern part of my district, and several homeowners in Hamilton Beach and the other coastal communities I represent are still dealing with the impact,” said **New York State Senator Joseph Addabbo Jr.** “With this third Sandy high water mark sign in my district, I believe this signage is a strong reminder to the community about the dangers of major storms and a realization that there is much more that needs to be done to ensure our coastal communities are truly resilient against future flooding and of the work that still needs to be done to help those from past flooding.”

“I want to thank NYC Emergency Management for unveiling an eight-foot high water mark in Hamilton Beach. With this sign it shows our history, the power of the water, and the need to stay safe,” said **Assembly Member Stacey Pheffer Amato**. “Years from now our children and grandchildren will understand how important it is for us to take safety and resiliency very seriously. Preparedness is key, and we’ll look to this high water mark for a reminder of that.”

“I’d like to thank Commissioner Esposito and all those of the NYC Emergency Management team that have made this initiative possible,” said **Council Member Eric Ulrich**. “Being prepared for a coastal storm can be life-saving, and this new high water mark sign will serve as an important reminder about the dangers of storm surge for the residents of Hamilton Beach.”

“Community Board 10 thanks NYC Emergency Management for the placement of a high water mark sign in our Hamilton Beach community. Hamilton Beach is the neighborhood within our Community board district that is most vulnerable to tidal flooding. This sign will serve as a continual visual reminder to all of us that preparedness for coastal storm events is vital in this area. Our future as a community will be better as we all continue to remember the impacts of Sandy and develop ways to increase our resilience and decrease our risk,” said **Queens Community Board 10 Chairperson Betty Braton**.

“With the fifth anniversary of Sandy less than three months away, the high water mark signs serve as a reminder that no matter how prepared you are Mother Nature can always find a way to win,” said **New Hamilton Beach Civic Association President Roger Gendron**.

“Thankfully, Hurricane Irene was not as bad as first predicted. However, Irene’s lack of severity helped to cause a sense of complacency with Sandy and many [people] didn’t heed the warnings. Prior to Sandy, I overheard the quote several times, ‘but Irene wasn’t that bad’. The sign is a clear indication of just how high the flood waters could go and the devastation that can and did occur.”

Even though the Atlantic hurricane season officially begins June 1 and runs through November 30, 84 percent of hurricanes form during peak hurricane season, from August through October. NYC Emergency Management plans and prepares year-round for coastal storms, and has a comprehensive Coastal Storm Plan that includes detailed procedures for evacuating and sheltering residents. In a major coastal storm, the City has the capacity to shelter up to 600,000 people with a shelter system that consists of 60 evacuation centers and more than 450 hurricane shelters, including special medical needs shelters. To supply and staff the shelter system, the City maintains an emergency stockpile of essential supplies and a database of City employees and volunteers who would be called upon to manage evacuation centers and emergency shelters. NYC Emergency Management also encourages New Yorkers to take steps to prepare for hurricane season:

**Know your zone:** New York City is divided into six hurricane evacuation zones – it is important to know whether you live in a zone. To find out what zone you live in, visit [www.nyc.gov/knowyourzone](http://www.nyc.gov/knowyourzone) or call 311.

**Make a plan:** Make a plan before a storm arrives to help keep you and your family safe. Each member of your family should have a Go bag – a collection of important supplies that you may need if you have to leave your home in a hurry. For more information on how to pack a Go bag, visit [here](#).

**Stay informed:** New Yorkers can stay informed about emergencies during hurricane season and throughout the year. To sign up for Notify NYC, New Yorkers can call 311, visit

[NYC.gov/NotifyNYC](http://NYC.gov/NotifyNYC), or follow @NotifyNYC on Twitter. Subscribers can receive alerts in seven ways: phone, email, SMS, fax, BlackBerry PIN, Instant Messenger, and Twitter.

The High Water Mark Initiative is a community-based awareness program that increases local communities' awareness of flood risk. As part of the project, communities post high water mark signs in prominent places and conduct ongoing education and complete mitigation actions to build community resilience against future flooding. The high water mark sign in Hamilton Beach reminds New Yorkers that on October 29, 2012, Hurricane Sandy brought a storm surge of eight feet to the community. The new sign is part of FEMA's pilot program for New York City and round the country and is one of nine signs installed throughout the City. Other areas that have participated in the New York City initiative include: Midland Beach, Staten Island; MCU Park and Coney Island library, Brooklyn; South Street Seaport, Manhattan; Breezy Point and Rockaway Beach, Queens. To find out more about FEMA's High Water Mark Initiative, click [here](#).

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New York City Emergency Management unveils an eight-foot high water mark sign, Tuesday, August 1, 2017 in Hamilton Beach, Queens.



(left to right) New Hamilton Beach Civic Association President Roger Gendron, Senator Joseph Addabbo Jr., New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito, Council Member Eric Ulrich, Assembly Member Stacey Pheffer Amato, Community liaison to the Queens Borough President Daniel Brown, and Community Board 10 Chairperson Betty Braton unveil eight-foot high water mark sign, Tuesday, August 1, 2017 in Hamilton Beach, Queens.