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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO UPDATES NEW YORKERS ON WINTER
STORM**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: ... should expect a lot of snow and unfortunately that's what we're getting. We see now the beginning of serious accumulation starting in different parts of the city. We expect a lot more as the day progresses particularly during the evening rush hours and I'm going to say it now, and I'm going to say it at different points in this session.

The number one message is, the evening rush hour is going to be very, very difficult. At times it's going to be very hard to see if you're out there on the roads. I want to encourage all New Yorkers right now – if you don't need to be out this evening, don't go out.

If you are at work right now, try and leave early if you possibly can. Employers try and let your staff out early because we expect from about 4:00 pm on the snow to start to accumulate very, very quickly and that's going to create tremendously difficult conditions particularly on the roads.

It's also going to create challenges for mass transit. So, clearly, as in all weather situations you're better off on mass transit than you are in a car. But even mass transit can be affected by this kind of intense snow if what we're hearing right now comes to pass.

So, want to urge everyone, try and get home early, try and stay off the roads.

Let me give you the projections at this moment. Right now, from the National Weather Service, a range of 12 inches to 18 inches for New York City. I remind everyone that can change at any given point, up or down. But we just got off the phone with the Weather Service and that is the current prediction, 12 inches to 18 inches. It will vary, of course, in different parts of the city.

The time frame to worry about, again, 4:00 pm to 10:00 pm today. 4:00 pm to 10:00 pm. During that time frame the projection is that the per hour precipitation is going to be from one inch of snow an hour to upwards of three inches of snow per hour.

I want to remind people, once you get above one inch per hour, it feels blizzard-like. You're talking about two to three inches an hour, that's very, very difficult conditions, very limited visibility, tough for our snow plows to keep up with.

I want to say as I always do, the Sanitation Department does an extraordinary job but they also have to deal with the reality of how quickly the snow is coming down. When you get into that kind of super intense accumulation, it takes time to catch up with it. Another great reason to be off the roads in that time frame, 4:00 pm to 10:00 pm, is to stay out of the way of the plows so they can do their work.

Want to give you updates on wind and temperature. Wind, we're hearing from the National Weather Service, gusts of up to 40 miles per hour. So, it will be a pretty windy situation to add to the visibility challenges and the snow accumulation. You're going to feel the wind out there and that's going to make driving tougher, walking tougher. Take that into account. Again that will get particularly tough during those late afternoon, early evening hours.

Temperature – this is maybe the one silver lining in the equation. Right now temperatures are hovering around freezing, might be a little bit below but we're not getting the bitter, bitter cold temperatures we've had in some of the past storms. And the projection for tomorrow is actually pretty good that we might have temperatures into the low 40s. That will certainly help a lot in terms of dealing with the aftermath.

I talked to our Sanitation Commissioner. You'll hear from her in a minute. Her assessment which has proven to be very, very accurate over these past four years is that if the storm stays on this current trajectory, this current time frame we will be in pretty good shape for the morning rush hour tomorrow but that's something we'll keep updating you on as we get more information.

Again, to note that when we're talking about that 4:00 pm to 10:00 pm range, that is absolutely blizzard-like conditions. So, expect the worst during that time frame and as I always remind people, that could change. It could go later, it could go earlier, it could go longer. We'll keep updating you.

The Sanitation Department is out in force. The Commissioner will go over it but they have all their equipment out, their personnel out, and they certainly know how to handle a situation like this.

Alternate Side Parking is suspended today and tomorrow. So, please if you don't need to move your car, leave it where it is, that's good for everyone.

Code Blue in effect citywide.

On some other travel and transportation points. Staten Island Ferry – normal schedule but keep an eye on the information we're putting out because that could change obviously. NYC Ferry – right now, most lines are normal but the Rockaway line has been suspended based on the conditions there. Airports – flights are limited right now. I'm certain that's going to get worse as

the day goes by. I would suspect very few flights will be happening later in the day. Check your airlines before you do anything. And Citi Bike will be suspended at 1:00 pm today.

I want to say, New Yorkers are always extraordinary when faced with adversity and extraordinary in their compassion for their neighbors. Check on your neighbors. If there's anyone in your building, on your block that you know who might be vulnerable, a senior, someone with a disability or a health need, check in on them. See if they need anything. That's makes a huge, huge difference.

Finally, if you're having any problem with heat or hot water please call 3-1-1 right away. Report it so we can get to work on making sure it's restored.

And then if there's any life threatening emergency, call 9-1-1 as always. Quickly in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that I want to turn first to our Commissioner for Emergency Management, Joe Esposito, for an update.

Commissioner Joseph Esposito, Office of Emergency Management: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And welcome to spring, everybody.

[Laughter]

The city's Emergency Operation Center has been activated since early this morning with dozens of our City and State agency partners working here to handle the response to the storm. Actually we have a 12:00 pm call with FEMA to see what they can supply if necessary. We are in constant communication with the National Weather Service. As the Mayor said, we just got off the phone with them, the forecast is as the Mayor said.

We have placed some of our task forces on alert – our downed tree task force and our tow truck task force. Matter of fact, the tow truck task force will be activated as of noon today which is just a little while from now. Again, try and stay off the roads. Maybe we won't have to use that task force unless we have to.

We also have Emergency Management personnel deployed across the five boroughs to help provide information about conditions throughout the city and to coordinate clean up efforts.

In addition, Con Ed's Emergency Operation Center is operational and we have personnel there in case of any power outages come by and we would expect some. This is going to be some heavy, wet snow, a lot of winds. So areas [inaudible] overhead wires might have some temporary power outages and we've been dealing with Con Ed and PSE&G to deal with that as fast as we can.

If you're going out to shovel, really – you gotta really be cautious today. It's going to be heavy, wet snow. Take it very slow. Dress warm. Make sure you take breaks. And as the Mayor said, check in on your neighbors, your relatives, if you've got some folks that are elderly, or a medical

condition – don't let them go out there and shovel. Try and either help them or get somebody to do it for them. But check in on them, they may need food, supplies, or medical attention. So, please check in on them.

For information and updates related to weather and travel conditions, sign up for NotifyNYC. That's the city's free emergency notification system. You get on that by going to either nyc.gov or calling 3-1-1.

We just got some information from New Jersey Transit buses. At 3:00 pm today, they will be discontinuing service, the bus service. For more information go to NewJerseyTransit.com for the most up-to-date conditions on that. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you, Commissioner. And finally, our Sanitation Commissioner, Kathryn Garcia.

Commissioner Kathryn Garcia, Department of Sanitation: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. As the Mayor said, we are fully deployed at this point in time. We were spreading salt on the overnight ahead of the storm. The plows started to roll around 10:00 am as we got to that two-inch mark varied across the city.

In addition we are joined by our sister agencies at the Department of Transportation, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Parks Department. They have added an additional 131 pieces of equipment. We are in 12 hour shifts and we'll stay in 12-hour shifts until we are through with this event. We have plenty of salt on hand. We have 227,000 tons of salt – or we did when started yesterday.

But we do anticipate that there will be white out conditions this afternoon and I do urge people to stay off the roads if they can because with the plows out there, it'll be safer for everyone. And I know that the commute in this morning was very, very light so I do thank New Yorkers for taking this storm very seriously. Thank you.

Mayor: Alright, we're going to take questions about this storm. Yes, sir.

Question: Hi Mayor, Greg Mocker from PIX 11 News – this is, what? The fourth one of these in three weeks? What's being done differently this time? Is it staffing? Making sure that the roads are getting plowed?

Mayor: If anyone doesn't think there's climate change, there's some further evidence. But look, we've learned from each storm what to do. And I think every agency is doing a great job and are coordinating well. Sanitation has really perfected how to get a lot of equipment out, how to deal with every kind of neighborhood, including the small streets – that's been a big innovation, so that's really been in effect these last few storms – for the first time to have all of the equipment out and the ability to get to the smaller streets more effectively. But basically, you know, what we're trying to do – and we learned each time – is if the minute we know that we can give people clear information, particularly on the schools when we feel we have a clear path forward, we want to get that information out. We were able to get that out before six o'clock yesterday, and, obviously, I can say from driving around today in Manhattan and Brooklyn, you know, it's quite

clear a lot of people, as you heard, heeded the warning and stayed back. And not having the school buses out there and all of the families moving around helped a lot. So, I do think the early mornings are helping, people are really listening – and I thank New Yorkers for that – and then that’s allowing Sanitation to do their job.

Yes?

Question: You said tomorrow morning’s commute should be fine – why do we believe that? What would be – I mean, obviously a lot of the storm [inaudible] so why do we believe that?

Mayor: It’s a great question, and the important thing to say is we believe that at this hour, and if something changes we’re going to be very straightforward about that. Why do we believe it right now? Because the National Weather Service is saying the worst will be over by 10 pm, and all snowfall will be over by midnight. We are – we’ve had a good start to the day in terms of Sanitation being able to move around and do their job. As you heard, they have the equipment, they have the salt, they have everything they need. If that timeline holds – and the Commissioner can talk about it in more detail – she’s confident that she can put the pieces together to have the roads sufficiently clear for a pretty normal rush hour. Why don’t you speak to the details a little more?

Commissioner Garcia: Certainly, for us, it’s really going to be about our ability to stay ahead of this storm. And while we do think it’s very intense, we do have the pieces of equipment to stay ahead of this storm. But it is about, once we get to the cessation of snowfall and having those hours on the overnight to be able to really go out and clear the streets. If the storm stalls and that snow doesn’t stop until much, much later, then we will come back to you and tell you that we don’t anticipate it to be quite as a normal a morning commute.

Mayor: Right, and I’ll add – we will keep instructing people accordingly. So, we constantly have to watch the evolution of each storm and then adjust the public messages. And so, I would say, people should be particularly focused on their 11 o’clock news and on their social media feed around that time, because that’s when we’ll know if the current projections actually held or if we got an unpleasant surprise.

Question: Mr. Mayor, I know NYCHA was rolling out a Situation Room-type setup to respond to the storm. Do you have any update on the current state of heat and hot water [inaudible]?

Mayor: Yeah, I think we have five developments with issue. Our General Manager for NYCHA, Vito Mustaciuolo is here, let him go over it.

General Manager Vito Mustaciuolo, NYCHA: Thank you. So, we did activate our situation room as over six o’clock this morning, and we plan on keeping it active until such time that we can stand down. We also have a representative here at the [inaudible]. As of about 30 minutes ago, we had reported outages at five of our developments, effecting 1,810 units. We do have repairs crews at all five locations and we fully expect to have the services restored by the end of day.

Question: [Inaudible]

General Manager Mustaciuolo: It's roughly 4,000 residents.

Question: Mr. Mayor, if there are some laborers – Hispanic – that feel that they should go to work, that don't want to be punished if they don't show up. What would you be your recommendation for that?

Mayor: Well, look, this morning, people were able to get to work, generally speaking. I mean, the roads were pretty clear during the morning rush hour. I think the issue now is for employers to recognize that the evening rush hour is going to be very, very tough and, to the maximum extent possible, let people go home early. So, four o'clock's a good time to peg it to. From four o'clock on – right this minute – we expect very intense precipitation. Again, anything could change, but I can tell you from the previous storms, the minute you get past one-inch per hour, when you get to two inches an hour, especially three inches an hour – that's very, very difficult conditions and very difficult for Sanitation. So, I would argue that the onus is not on the employees, the vast majority of whom probably went to work this morning as normal. The onus is on employers to the maximum extent possible, let employees go home early. Some can't do that, I understand, but, if you can, it's a good time to do it.

Yes?

Question: [Inaudible] Chairwoman Olatoye is not here for [inaudible] why is she not here and what is she doing today?

Mayor: I don't know the history of who has come from each agency to each press conference with each storm – I think it's been different people from different agencies. I know Chief Leonard is here from Fire, and other times it might be Commissioner Nigro, for example. The fact is, when it comes to the operational issues that NYCHA is facing at this moment, that's the purview of the General Manager. You can certainly talk to the Chair's office about the other things she's doing today.

Anything else?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: I absolutely have faith – I've said it more times than I can count. I have tremendous faith in her. She is the leader of that agency, she's the strategic leader, but, like with every other agency, there are also operational leaders, and the General Manager runs day-to-day operations. You also have behind, as I'm going to use – Chief Leonard is my poster child – runs day-to-day operations at the Fire Department. It's a very normal structure.

Any other questions?

Question: I'm just wondering if we could get your reaction to Chris Quinn's statement –

Mayor: Let's stay on the storm. Go ahead –

Question: The power outages at NYCHA – and those people may want to be warming their homes – what should they not do and what should they do if they want to keep warm in their own homes?

Mayor: Yeah, I'm going to start, and then Vito, Joe Esposito – anyone who wants to chime in. This is a real issue not just in public housing, but in all housing. I understand – you know, unfortunately power outages are a part of life during storms. Sometimes heat is out – this is true in public buildings, private buildings, and I get that people want to try to find any source of heat, but the danger can be even greater if it's done the wrong way. People should never use their oven to heat their home, for example – that's a dangerous dynamic. So, we really want to remind people, if there's a heat problem, as you heard, there are crews on the scene in terms of the NYCHA developments. If it's a private building, call 3-1-1 right away so we can get to work getting the landlord to fix the problem and the building managers to fix the problem, or we will send City crews if we're not getting the response we need. But people sometimes try and find an alternative source of heat, that can create some real danger and, obviously, Chief Leonard can speak to that as well.

Chief of Department James Leonard, FDNY: First, I would plead with people to have a working smoke detector. Make sure it's working with a working carbon monoxide detector. Secondly, with any portable heating device, it must be [inaudible] approved. Do not use extension chords to activate it, plug it into a wall outlet. The third would be, be very careful about how close you put that portable heating device to any combustibles. The first thing is, make sure we have a working smoke detector in that room. Using the oven, like the Mayor said, is not a good idea for heat. There are problems with carbon monoxide with that. We just have to be careful with the use of portable heating devices.

Mayor: [Inaudible]

Chief Leonard: Well, the space heaters – if we're using the space heaters, they should be [inaudible] approved and they must be plugged into a wall outlet. Do not use extension chords when using any portable space heaters.

Commissioner Esposito: And as I said earlier, we are ConEd's command center. These numbers that are outages in housing right now are not unusual. We get a number of outages throughout the City on any given day, but we're coordinating with NYCHA and ConEd if need be. If it's a ConEd issue, we'll get them out there as fast as possible. If it's a NYCHA issue, we get them out there as fast as possible, and we'll jump in as fast as we can. We think most of these outages will be done sometime today. We ask people just to hunker down and try and stay warm until the heat comes back on.

Mayor: Okay – last call. Yes?

Question: Mayor, have you been in touch with Governor Cuomo about the storm response today? And are you keeping an eye on what could happen to the MTA? Obviously, there was a time in the past where it was shut down –

Mayor: Yeah, the two offices are in regular touch in these situations for sure. The MTA is represented here. In fact, let's let them give an update.

Senior Vice President Darryl Irick, New York City Transit: Okay, so current state of affairs is that the bus and subway network is holding its own, but based on the forecast we will expect sporadic delays, potential curtailments, and even suspensions. So, I would say, let's keep our eyes open, our ears open, let's sign up for the MTA alerts, look at the MTA.info site as the day progresses. There's a high likelihood that there will be adjustments, delays, and maybe even curtailments. As it relates to the subway, that could mean running underground only. As it relates to the buses, certain routes, or certain portions of routes, could be suspended. But we'll have to watch and see.

Mayor: Now, tell me if I get this right from an MTA perspective. What we don't have here is what we had with the blizzard a few years ago, which was the worst in our history – 29 inches. We're not talking about anything like that. So, I think we're seeing the dangers to the overground lines with the subway, not the underground in this instance. We don't see any scenario where the underground should be effected right now?

Irick: At this point, no.

Mayor: Okay. Yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, we've already seen Governor Cuomo out helping some motorists on the road in the snow. Will we – can we expect to see you helping out?

Mayor: I will be out in some neighborhoods shortly. If someone needs my help, I'm always ready. I'm an experienced, as you know, shoveler of snow.

Yes?

Question: [Inaudible] NYCHA website, since 5:40 am, the [inaudible] an entire development [inaudible] out, as in no heat or hot water. There's 3,080 people. Could you give us the history of King Towers? Have they lost heat previously this year? What's the history?

General Manager Mustaciuolo: So, I don't have the history of the particular development with me. I can tell you though that restoration of the services occurred earlier this morning. So, heat and hot water have been restored to King Towers.

Question: [Inaudible]

General Manager Mustaciuolo: The website is not up-to-date.

Question: That says the 4,000 people are in addition – that doesn't include the –

General Manager Mustaciuolo: Again, services have been restored to Kings Towers.

Mayor: We'll get you the blow-by-blow. But yes, websites, websites are often behind the action as things are evolving. Okay, last call on the storm – let's see if there's anything you've got. Going once – twice – okay.

Thanks, everyone.

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