

THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
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NEW YORK, NY 10007

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** August 3, 2020, 3:00 PM

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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY ON  
TROPICAL STORM ISAIAS PREPARATIONS**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** All right, everybody. Well, what you're seeing here are the preparations for the storm that's going to be coming in, in the next 24 hours. And I want to thank Commissioner Deanne Criswell, everyone at Emergency Management, everyone at Environmental Protection, Department of Transportation – there's a lot of agencies that are working right now to make sure things are safe and secure. What you see here are the tiger dams. So, these orange barriers have been put in place, filled with water, and they connect to the HESCO barriers, that's the tan barriers you see down there, that's a permanent feature. So, what's going to happen here by the end of the day today is you will have a full ceiling, a full barrier from Catherine Slip up by the Brooklyn Bridge all the way down to Wall Street.

Now, for anybody who was here after Hurricane Sandy, you will remember how hard this neighborhood got hit. I talked to a lot of people in those days who lived here, a lot of people who worked here. They went through, really, hell in this neighborhood. A lot of businesses were closed for a long time. It was a very, very difficult situation. This is a particularly low-lying area with a lot of people in it. So, these barriers now are going to provide us a different kind of protection than what we were dealing with back then. If you look over by the Wavertree, I was pointing earlier to that sign, right to the left of the ship, that shows you the high-water mark from Sandy. It was four feet from ground level – from where we are standing – four feet of storm surge. We're expecting a lot less, thank God, with this storm, but it reminds you of what people went through and why it is so important to protect this neighborhood and neighborhoods that are vulnerable. And a lot of different things have been done over the years. Permanent barriers being put in place in a lot of areas. I mentioned this morning, the Rockaway Beach boardwalk – five-and-a-half mile long permanent barrier. It's a great example, but many, many other efforts have been put in and will be put in in the coming years.

This is a kind of thing we'll have to do to protect ourselves from this point forward, given climate change and the challenges we face. So, I want to thank all of the agencies that have done this great work, and want to encourage all New Yorkers, take this storm seriously. Please take precautions. Please look out for your neighbors. If anyone needs help, make sure you're there for them because this is the kind of thing that comes on fast and people need to be ready. I'm going to say a few words in Spanish and I'd like us all to hear from Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, I want to call up someone who has really seen what happened to this neighborhood after Sandy and has worked with us to make sure it's protected going forward, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer.

**Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor. And I want to thank the Commissioner and everybody in this administration who focuses so intently and successfully on issues regarding sustainability. And I am very pleased – I know that in the past, further north, when we had barriers, they are still there. We worked with OEM and got artists to be part of that wonderful project. And, obviously, today, as the Mayor indicated, we are all very conscious of Sandy. We remember what four feet look like, and we have here the Director of the South Street Seaport Museum, Captain Jonathan Boulware, right over there. He certainly remembers it. And what we want to make sure is that we have these wonderful barricades. They're really cool. They're very sustainable. They will do the job and we're really looking forward to seeing that these wonderful barricades keep this neighborhood from being flooded. It's flooding from the river, but it's also sometimes flooding coming up in the buildings. This is a very challenging low-rise area and we're working with the South Street Seaport Museum to try to make sure that they have a sustainable future. But here today with a storm coming, New York City is ready. And, of course, in my role, Manhattan is ready. Thank you very much to this administration.

**Mayor:** Thank you, Gale. And we're going to take some questions. I just want to say to Deanne and Jaimey, if there's any questions feel free to come up as you deem fit to answer. So, questions about the storm coming on. Yeah?

**Question:** Can we have some examples here of what's different than eight years with Sandy? [Inaudible] specifically – how are we better prepared [inaudible] –

**Mayor:** How better prepared, in general?

**Question:** [Inaudible] what else do you have?

**Mayor:** Well, we can get you the list and Jaimey, I'm sure, can speak to this in a moment. There's a number of measures that have been completed, and there's a number that have now been started and there's a whole swath of Manhattan here that's going to be addressed permanently in the coming years. So, we're unquestionably better off. We also know a hell of a lot more and we take these threats so much more seriously in terms of how we prepare. And God forbid, we ever had to get to a moment of evacuation, we're in a much better position to do so from the tough lessons we learned with Sandy. But this storm appears to have a very localized impact in this area. This is the one area we're particularly concerned about given the projections and we have the tools ready to address it.

**Question:** [Inaudible] better prepared in case it does change [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** Look, again, the permanent changes that have been already in place in Queens, in Brooklyn, in Staten Island – there's a host of things that are different just since Sandy, but a hell of a lot more to do. I always say to people, the work of resiliency is going to go on for years and

years, decades. We are unquestionably in better shape. But you're right, storms are unpredictable. So, we do our best to prepare for what we know and then keep building from there. Jainey, you want to talk about the extent of previous efforts to date and some of the things coming up?

**Director Jainey Bavishi, Mayor's Office of Resiliency:** You know, as the Mayor said, we have a number of coastal protection projects – I'm sorry. My name is Jainey Bavishi. I'm the Director of the Mayor's Office of Resiliency. As the Mayor said, we have a number of coastal protection projects that have already been completed in the Rockaways. In Staten Island, we've installed new dunes. And we've also completed a coastal production project in Seagate in Brooklyn. And this program that you were talking about today, interim flood protection measures program is just that, it's interim. And in many of the sites where we're installing these measures, there are permanent projects coming. We're actually breaking ground on East Side Coastal Resiliency and the Rockaway Reformulation project this fall. And there are a number of other projects coming across the city that we're working to advance now. But I also just want to mention that besides coastal protection, we're also hardening our critical infrastructure, whether it's energy, wastewater, sewer, or transportation infrastructure. And a lot of that work has been completed since Sandy. And we've also improved many of our operational emergency response measures, which Deanne could speak to, since Sandy, incorporating the lessons that we learned during Sandy. So, overall, we are much better prepared.

**Mayor:** Yes, I just want to add on this, that the point about the hardening infrastructure, for example, in a lot of the public housing buildings, there's been a huge amount of work done, thanks to FEMA funding, to move mechanicals to a safer level in the building. We've seen that with a lot of nursing homes, backup generators, all sorts of things that we did not have at the time of Sandy that have really a lot of work since then, building by building. Obviously, we know what happened to NYU Hospital and the work that's been done there. So, there's a lot of examples like that around the city. Do you want to anything or? You good? Okay, Katie?

**Question:** I know you briefly touched on it this morning, but can you further explain the science behind why the incumbent storm would only affect [inaudible] the Seaport and Lower Manhattan? I think it would be the first storm in history that would flood Lower Manhattan but not flood the lower lying areas of the outer boroughs?

**Mayor:** No, I disagree with that assumption. Let me have Deanne speak – well again, I just disagree with the assumption. I'll tell you why. Every storm is different and each storm is based on – they do the work based on the projections they have. And in fact, I've many times have experienced storms that had very disparate effects in different parts of the city. So, I just don't think it's fair to say they're all the same. Go ahead.

**Commissioner Deanne Criswell, Emergency Management:** So, Katie, just to expand a little bit on what I talked about this morning is we take a lot of factors into consideration. The direction the storm is coming from actually has a big input into the impacts that it's going to have, the strength of the storm itself. And we put that all into modeling so we can determine what we think the storm surge is going to be. So, it's important to remember that this barrier right here is to protect from storm surge. And we're really only expecting a moderate, mild to moderate amount of storm surge, which is about one to two feet. We will see some coastal storm

inundation in other areas, but it would be the same that we would see in severe thunderstorms and other severe weather. And none that would lead us to believe that it would be anything greater than that, which would require additional protection. So, based on our modeling, this is the area that we felt really did need some additional protection to protect from the one to two feet of storm surge.

Now we are also expecting a large amount of rain. And so, we know we're going to have flooding citywide across all of the boroughs because of this rain and those spots where we always see flooding. And that's where we activated our flash flood plan. And we've had crews out all weekend that have been cleaning catch basins, clearing the streets so we can identify – so we can prepare those spots that we know that we normally see that kind of flooding, to help reduce the impact. But there will still be some impact. And so, the next thing that we're doing to help mitigate that is we are going to have, from my team, we're going to borough deploy responders, Operations folks out into each of the boroughs so they can quickly identify any problem areas and coordinate resources right on the scene to quickly respond. And that's something that we actually didn't do during Sandy. And I think it'll make a big impact on how we respond here.

**Question:** [Inaudible] Specifically about the [inaudible] special team require [inaudible] a little bit about how that is going?

**Commissioner Criswell:** Yeah. Great question. So, the question was, how do we fill these up and how do we install them? So, it takes about 72 hours to 96 hours to install, if we were to do all of them across the city. We only had this one and so we're able to do it in about 48 hours. We have a contract that we bring in to help establish it. As the Mayor had said, we have these HESCO barriers that have been pre-staged across this area here. And that is so we can reduce the time that it takes to put in place. The tiger dams, the orange that you see here, get filled with water, and our contract firm does that, and it fills in the gaps and it closes the distance between those HESCO barriers. And so, that will all be done no later than 10:00 pm tonight. And then the seams from where the HESCO barriers meet the tiger dams, we will put sandbags over those seams so we can further reinforce that. So, by the time we're done tonight, we should have one seamless barrier to protect from the one to two feet of inundation or a storm surge that we think we're going to see.

**Mayor:** All right, we can do one or two more. Go ahead?

**Question:** [Inaudible] this morning and I was wondering if maybe the Commissioner could answer this. [Inaudible] what it looked like, what kind of winds, at what time it was going to arrive [inaudible]? What's the latest, in case it's changed?

**Mayor:** Yes. Things have speeded up a little bit and I'll let the Commissioner review that with you.

**Commissioner Criswell:** Yeah. The question was, you know, the timing of the storm. And it has sped up a little bit, not a ton. We do expect to see some rain still coming in this evening intermittently, but the large amount of the rain we expect to now see late tomorrow morning,

where we originally thought we were going to see it maybe more into the afternoon. So, we still expect to see about two to four inches of rain with some areas across the city that could see up to six inches in periodic moments. The winds should start about the same time later in the morning tomorrow, late morning. It could be 35 to 50 miles per hour sustained winds, that could be sustained for a period of about three hours. And we could actually see gusts up to 70 miles an hour, and that's an increase from what I briefed this morning. And so that period of winds we expect to last between about three to six hours, but sustained for about three hours and those gusts in a three hour period. So, I would say somewhere between 11:00 am in the morning and between two and three in the afternoon, as it looks right now. But this storm has changed in its intensity throughout the time that we've been watching this. And so, we get another update this afternoon and we'll be updating the Mayor as to when we think the likelihood of the impacts we'll see. But right now, late morning tomorrow where we see the majority.

**Mayor:** Last call, last call, media questions, last call. Okay. Thanks everybody.

**Question:** [Inaudible]?

**Commissioner Criswell:** Yeah. High tide is expected tomorrow evening between nine and 10:00 pm. So, the fact that the storm is moving up faster actually is better for the city in how – the impacts that we're going to experience.

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