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

August 3, 2017 — As New York City heads into peak hurricane season (August through October), the New York City Emergency Management Department and Brooklyn Public Library today unveiled a new high water mark sign in Gerritsen Beach, Brooklyn, to promote public awareness about the dangers of coastal storms. The new sign was unveiled at the Gerritsen Beach branch of the Brooklyn Public Library.

“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 four feet at the library when Hurricane Sandy hit in 2012, destroying books, furniture, and equipment,” 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.”

“It has been almost five years since Hurricane Sandy severely damaged the Gerritsen Beach library and five other branches,” said **Brooklyn Public Library President and CEO Linda E. Johnson**. “The beautifully renovated library is a testament to the resiliency of this community, and the high water mark plaque reminds us all to be prepared.”

“Superstorm Sandy was an incredibly powerful storm that caused great devastation and destruction in many of our coastal communities,” said **Senator Martin J. Golden**. “This high water mark sign is a stark reminder of the danger hurricanes pose to people living in the City’s many hurricane evacuation zones. I want to thank NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito and his team for their emergency preparedness plans and their tireless efforts to keep all New Yorkers safe. As we head into peak hurricane season, let this sign remind us that we must remain ever vigilant and be prepared to protect our property and our loved ones.”

“The pain of the high water mark left by Superstorm Sandy’s storm surge is being turned into purpose, specifically into the purpose of a high water mark we want to establish for public awareness on future coastal flooding risks,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams**. “I thank Commissioner Esposito for his continued commitment to education in communities like Coney Island and Gerritsen Beach on emergency matters that can make a big difference in the hours where circumstances test us most.”

“As the years go by and Superstorm Sandy seems to be in the past, the lessons learned must carry over to our future; the importance of the High Water Mark Initiative serves to illustrate the importance of making sure that all areas are protected,” said **Assembly Member Jaime Williams**. “As a Disaster Case Supervisor for Catholic Charities I witnessed first-hand the

devastation wrought to the Gerritsen Beach area; it is with great pride that I can take part in this initiative and watch as Gerritsen Beach flourishes once again.”

“As Gerritsen Beach and other waterfront areas have been a part of this storm, we must remember how high the water rose and how important it is to be prepared for emergencies. As an emergency responder during the storm, I was a witness to this horrific event and damage to this community that is still rebuilding after almost five years. Let’s hope that we have learned from this storm and become more prepared for the storms to come,” said **CERT Brooklyn 15 Team Chief Doreen Garson**. “It is my hope that we grow as a community to help each other prepare for future storms.”

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 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, 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 Gerritsen Beach reminds New Yorkers that on October 29, 2012, Hurricane Sandy brought a storm surge of four feet to the library, destroying books, furniture, and equipment. The new sign is part of FEMA’s pilot program for New York City and round the country and is one of ten signs installed throughout the City. Other areas that have participated in the New York City initiative include:



**Emergency
Management**

NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

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Midland Beach, Staten Island; MCU Park and Coney Island library, Brooklyn; South Street Seaport, Manhattan; Breezy Point, Rockaway Beach, and Hamilton Beach, Queens. To find out more about FEMA's High Water Mark Initiative, click [here](#).

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