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Subject: RE: RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS UPDATE ON BUILDING EXPLOSION IN BOROUGH PARK



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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS UPDATE ON BUILDING EXPLOSION IN
BOROUGH PARK**

Mayor de Blasio: Obviously a very tough day here in Borough Park. It is [inaudible]. It is the Sabbath day in Borough Park. This is a community I know well, and I represented in the City Council. So, I know it was a real shock to the residents of this community to here this explosion. And I want everyone in the community to know that the FDNY and NYPD have responded very, very effectively in this situation. I want to thank Commissioner Nigro and Chief Leonard for their efforts, and the efforts of all the men and women of the FDNY in responding.

Let me give you a couple of the updates before you hear from the commissioner and the chief. This is a tragedy because we know we've lost one person. The identity of the individual has still not been confirmed, but we have lost one person in this explosion. We have four – excuse me three civilian injuries. The civilians are in the hospital – at Methodist Hospital. One is in critical care, but not life threatening from what we know now. We have five firefighters with minor injuries who were given medical care here on the scene and did not require hospitalization, thank God. So, this is a very tough situation, but the response from the FDNY and the other first responders has been extraordinary. Over 200 firefighters have participated in arresting this situation, and ensuring that the fire did not spread. The fire is under control. It's still smoldering, but it is under control. And in the coming hours FDNY will be able to put the fire out and then begin the investigation of the site, and begin the effort to get a fuller idea of what happened here exactly. We're going to emphasize that the information we have is preliminary because until the fire is entirely out and the Fire Marshalls and other personnel can get into to examine the site we won't have final answers. But we do know that, obviously, you've seen the physical scene there. One building with extreme damage and another building that suffered heavy damage; some others around it that suffered smoke damage. After the FDNY arrived – and I understand the response time was about three minutes, which is extraordinary – they were able to get people from all the surrounding buildings out except for the one, tragically the one casualty. But a very, very fast response time. We will be doing, again, a full investigation. Some of the other key players here – Department of Buildings, Commissioner Rick Chandler; OEM Commissioner, Joe Esposito. All the relevant agencies will be involved in the investigation. I also want to thank Borough President Eric Adams and Councilmember Brad Lander for being here to support the community, and to work with all of us on this situation.

Let me turn now to Commissioner Nigro to give you some further updates.

FDNY Commissioner, Daniel Nigro: Well, the mayor stated— at 1:05 pm we received an alarm for an explosion. The entire front of this building – 1406 was blown out into the street. We believe that – and again, as he stated everything is preliminary. We have not yet been in that building because of the severe structural damage. We believe that it originated on the second floor. We have some indication that there was a stove exchange for the tenant. So, that’s how—what we believe was involved. Again, all preliminary we will not do a complete investigation until later tonight – it’ll start. That’s where we believe it occurred. The person that is deceased is in the original building – that’s where it occurred in the stairwell of that building. There were no other people in the building that we know of. Although we did not complete a search of that building – 1406. So we won’t know until that’s completed. But we don’t have a report of missing person. There’s one person that we are still trying to confirm the whereabouts of. That’s the situation as it stands right now. The fire will be smoldering for some time – until later this evening. When we complete that we will move forward with the investigation.

Mayor: Okay, yes.

Question: Can you explain what a stove exchange is?

Commissioner Nigro: We are told that the tenant there purchased a high end stove – it was their own stove. They were moving out of the apartment, and were going to take that stove with them. So, ofcourse, to take a stove with you it entails disconnecting the gas line, which leads us preliminarily to look in that direction as the cause of this explosion.

Question: Who had disconnected the gas line?

Commissioner Nigro: That -- we do not know anything about that yet.

Question: In other words they were moving out of the second floor. The woman who is dead was on the third floor. Is that correct?

Commissioner Nigro: The woman was in the stairwell somewhere between – in the second floor area. The apartment where the stove was being removed was on the second floor.

Question: Three people at the hospital [inaudible].

Commissioner Nigro: There's one person who we have still not found. We don't know if they were involved—were they here today or not. The police department is trying to locate that person.

Question: They were in the original building?

Commissioner Nigro: They were a resident of the building.

Mayor: Again, that individual may have been some place entirely different. So we're trying to confirm their whereabouts.

Question: Can you give ages and genders at this point? We're hearing possible a baby?

Commissioner Nigro: The folks that were hurt in the street was a father and son ages 33 and 10 and a 27-year-old young man.

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Nigro: Not the ten-year-old. One – the older one.

Mayor: Right, and just to clarify – hold on one second I just want you to clarify that they were walking by.

Commissioner Nigro: Those three persons were walking by. The debris was thrown out across the street, and they were injured with flying debris from the explosion.

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Nigro: Well, bricks and everything else that came out the building.

Question: Opposite side of the street or was it the same side?

Commissioner Nigro: I don't know. That I don't know.

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Nigro: Excuse me?

Question: How many people were in the buildings?

Commissioner Nigro: As far as we confirmed, one.

Question: She was in the stairwell?

Commissioner Nigro: She was in the stairwell.

Question: Is she still there? Are you able to move her?

Commissioner Nigro: She's still there.

Mayor: Wait – clarification on the previous – chief just explained about the location of –

Chief Leonard: One of the windows did blow out across the street, but the people that were injured on the street were on the sidewalk in front of the building.

Mayor: The same side as the building.

Chief Leonard: On the same side of the street – right in front of the building. But debris did get blown across the street.

Question: And that was three people on the street?

Chief Leonard: That's correct.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Let's clarify.

Chief Leonard: Two men ages 33 and 27 and a ten-year-old boy who was the son of one of those men.

Question: [inaudible] the woman who died was in her 60s. Is that correct?

Unknown: We don't have that.

Mayor: And we're still waiting on confirmation.

Commissioner Nigro: We have no confirmation.

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Nigro: We don't have confirmation on here yet on who she is.

Mayor: Let me just – first I want to thank our Public Advocate Letitia James for joining us in support of the community. Again, until FDNY can get into the building and confirm the identity of the deceased individual we don't want to speculate. But first they have to finish the last reminisce of the fire. You can see the fire is under

control. It's not spreading. It's still smoldering. They have to finish that. They have to deal with the fact that it's a structurally unsound situation before people can go in. Then they'll be able to identify the individual and go on with the investigation. And that will happen later on as we get into the evening.

Question: So is it possible that building could collapse?

Mayor: You guys and Rick want to –

Unknown: Absolutely.

Question: I'm sorry what was that question -- will the buildings collapse?

Chief Leonard: There's always a possibility of a building collapsing.

Question: Mayor, any comment on the number of explosions that you've had to respond to?

Mayor: We've had three different incidents. Each one has been different obviously. I'll let the commissioner and the chief speak to the particulars, but three very distinct incidents.

Chief Leonard: If you go back to Park Avenue it was a structure issue. If we go to Second Avenue it was a piping – improper usage in the basement. And here we have something that occurred within an apartment. So the only common thread, ofcourse, is the natural gas and the dangers of natural gas.

Mayor: And let me –

Chief Leonard: We also have the high school explosion up in the Bronx. That was also gas, but that was people working on the gas pipe.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: That was people working on the gas line in the Bronx, and obviously, unfortunately, doing it in an inappropriate manner. But I want to take this juncture to say something important. One thing – and I'll let the commissioner and the chief speak to this. After the situation in East Harlem we emphasized to people in New York City – if you smell gas call 9-1-1. We know in too many cases people haven't done that in the past. We know tragically in the incident in East Harlem that people did in fact smell gas and didn't make the phone call. And had they made the phone call we might have been able to save lives. So, I want to emphasize it's something we can get out to people that really will save lives. Anytime you smell gas don't hesitate, call 9-1-1. Better safe than sorry. And FDNY can come and check on the situation to make sure people are safe.

Question: Did someone call in this case?

Mayor: To the best of our knowledge, no.

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Nigro: There were no reports of an odor or gas. This year alone we have responded to 18,000 more calls than in the previous year for odors of gas. But today the first call we received was that there was an explosion.

Question: Was the landlord or building owner aware that there was going to be a stove exchange? Is there a process behind that?

It was approved, yeah. It was not [inaudible].

Question: Does the stove exchange require any particular kind of permit?

Commissioner Nigro: It does not.

Question: Would Con Ed be required to turn off the gas or anything like that?

Commissioner Nigro: No. It started in the apartment.

Question: Governor Cuomo has called for a state investigation of the gas issues. Your reaction to that?

Mayor: Well we, again, our responsibility with both the FDNY and when necessary NYPD is to conduct a full investigation. We do that in each and every situation. I have absolute faith in the ability of the FDNY and the NYPD to get down to the bottom of this situation. We're always willing to work with other agencies as well in collaboration. We've done that in the past. But the facts are going to be determined by the FDNY and NYPD, and they're going to start later on this evening.

Thanks everyone.

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