



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**NEW YORK CITY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROVIDES  
SUMMARY OF CITY'S RESPONSE TO STEAM MAIN EXPLOSION IN  
MIDTOWN MANHATTAN ONE WEEK AGO**

***ONE WEEK AGO FROZEN ZONE SPANNED TEN BLOCK AREA;  
NOW LIMITED TO INTERSECTION WHERE EXPLOSION OCCURRED***

The City's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is coordinating the inter-agency response to the steam pipe explosion on Lexington Avenue. OEM, along with several City agencies including the Fire Department (FDNY), the Police Department (NYPD) and the Departments of Environmental Protection (DEP), Buildings (DOB), Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Sanitation (DSNY) and Small Business Services (SBS) continue to operate from the scene. They are joined by personnel from the Grand Central Partnership, ConEdison, New York City Transit and Verizon.

ConEdison remains on-scene repairing the utility infrastructure that was damaged in the explosion at 41<sup>st</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue. The frozen zone has now been reduced to the area approximately 100 feet north, south, east and west of the explosion site and does not block access to any office building in the area. The frozen zone is the only area where protective equipment is required and is dictated by how much space Con Ed needs to access and repair the crater.

The following is a summary of the City's efforts to quickly and safely inspect, clean and reopen the area around the explosion:

Reducing traffic closures and the frozen zone, in which pedestrian and business access was restricted because of potential asbestos contamination, has been the City's priority. The original frozen zone ran from East 40<sup>th</sup> to East 43<sup>rd</sup> Streets and from Vanderbilt Avenue to Third Avenue. As cleanup efforts progressed, the City was able to reduce the frozen zone to a four square block area bounded by the north side of East 40<sup>th</sup> Street, the south side of East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, the west side of Third Avenue and the east side of Park Avenue. As of today, it is only 100 feet in each direction from the explosion site.

OEM has worked quickly to have assessment teams visit each building in the frozen zone to inspect properties for contaminants. Any building in which debris has been discovered has been required to have a licensed contractor conduct cleanup work. DEP and DOHMH personnel are on-scene to supervise cleanup work and assist building owners in safely reopening their properties as quickly as possible.

OEM's Interagency Command Center has served as the central meeting point for the many City, state and federal agencies, as well as utilities and private contractors, working onsite. The office's Mobile Data Center, with its on-scene mapping capabilities, has been able to provide emergency personnel and contractors with accurate depictions of frozen zones, traffic restrictions and building status updates.

Other accomplishments:

- Third Avenue was entirely opened to traffic on Friday, July 20<sup>th</sup>.
- All restrictions on businesses and pedestrians in the area between East 42<sup>nd</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> Streets ended on Saturday morning, July 21<sup>st</sup>.
- The north side of East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street was reopened to businesses and pedestrians on Saturday evening, July 21<sup>st</sup>.
- East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street was entirely reopened to businesses, pedestrians and vehicles by 5am on Monday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- To date, eight of the eleven buildings south of 42<sup>nd</sup> Street requiring cleaning have been certified to reopen. Repair work and cleaning operations are underway at the remaining three buildings.
- A website that serves as a central repository of information regarding the explosion has been established. It is available at [www.nyc.gov/oem](http://www.nyc.gov/oem)

## ***SBS***

The Department of Small Business Services' Business Outreach Team has contacted over 300 businesses by telephone and 87 businesses in person, and continues to be on site as businesses re-enter their establishments to help them re-open. The Team is helping businesses with issues such as facilitating deliveries and the removal of garbage, and providing information about the City's emergency loan program.

SBS has already established an interest-free \$10,000 loans program for businesses in the former and current frozen zones. The loans will not require repayments for the first six months, and applicants will receive responses within one week of application. In addition to bringing loan applications door to door to local businesses, the Department of Small Business Services will be on site at the Commerce Bank located at 317 Madison Avenue at 42 Street to help businesses apply for the loans.

The Department of Small Business Services worked to substantiate the economic and physical injury to businesses to support the Mayor's request to Governor Spitzer for application for federal Small Business Administration loans, which was made yesterday.

In the immediate aftermath of the explosion, the Department of Small Business Services called upon neighboring business improvement districts to assist the Grand Central Partnership, which is located within the frozen zone. The Fashion, East Midtown and Times Square business improvement districts provided supplementary sanitation services to keep the area surrounding the frozen zone clean, and the Grand Central Partnership utilized office space and a telephone line at the Department of Small Business Services before moving into temporary office space in the area on Monday.

## ***DEP***

After the explosion, DEP began to test air and ground samples for possible asbestos contamination. Air sampling is being conducted throughout the cleanup operation. Of the 71 air samples collected by DEP to date, none tested positive for asbestos. Bulk sampling of dirt and debris around the site has also taken place throughout the past week. Of the 79 bulk samples collected by DEP, 2 tested positive for asbestos, and 28 others showed trace amounts of asbestos. The remaining 40 bulk samples showed no asbestos. DEP has also ensured that all external cleanups were performed in the frozen zone, so that streets could be reopened. DEP has also approved an abatement plan submitted by Con Ed to decontaminate the crater. DEP's Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations is also on-scene to ensure water service is back to all customers in the area.

Results of all air and ground sampling is available on DEP's website at: [www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep)

## ***DOHMH***

DOHMH has worked closely with building owners in the affected area to ensure buildings are safely cleaned, re-inspected, and re-opened. All but three buildings have been cleared to re-open. The agency continues to work with the Grand Central Partnership to communicate with local businesses.

Health Department staff have also been on-scene distributing information to the public and answering questions about re-occupation.

## ***NYPD***

The NYPD has maintained a large presence of police officers to enforce frozen zone restrictions and reduce traffic disruptions in the area around the explosion. The number of police officers in place to enforce the smaller restricted areas has shrunk from over 200 to 40. In the minutes after the blast, 350 officers responded to the scene. Soon after the initial explosion, the NYPD's Intelligence Division determined that it was accidental and not related to terrorism. NYPD Emergency Service and other officers evacuated civilians from the immediate area. Within 10 minutes of the blast, the first of three NYPD helicopters was launched, with FDNY personnel on board one of them, to provide operational guidance to personnel on the ground. Live televised feeds were also provided to operational commanders on the ground.

## ***FDNY***

The FDNY immediately responded to the explosion and worked to treat the injured and evacuate individuals from the area. After the initial rescue, Fire Department personnel worked closely with DEP and ConEdison to wash down the facades of buildings in the frozen zone.

***DOB***

DOB forensic engineers were able to quickly determine that some of the buildings bordering the crater, which sustained minor damage in the form of broken windows, were structurally sound.

DOB directed private contractors to remove any broken glass and board up broken windows to prepare the buildings to be reoccupied. These operations were completed this past weekend.

***DSNY***

DSNY has maintained a presence on-scene throughout the cleanup operation. The department assisted with cleaning of key streets that had been found to be free of contaminants by deploying mechanical sweepers, a street flushing truck and litter basket collection teams.

The City of New York will remain on-scene until cleanup operations are completed and frozen zone restrictions are lifted. Updates on business and pedestrian restrictions, as well as roadway closures, will continue to be provided at [www.nyc.gov/oem](http://www.nyc.gov/oem).

Information on reimbursements from Con Edison is available at [www.coned.com](http://www.coned.com), or by calling 212-460-3221.

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