



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO GIVES LEGIONNAIRES' UPDATE AT PRESS
CONFERENCE TO ANNOUNCE "NYC SAFE," AN EVIDENCE-DRIVEN PUBLIC SAFETY AND
PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM THAT WILL HELP PREVENT VIOLENCE**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: So, let me – we're going to talk about Legionnaires', then again, we'll go on to other topics after. So let's go over this first. Welcome, Commissioner Bassett. Welcome, First Deputy Mayor Shorris. So, let me just start and then turn to the First Deputy Mayor. First of all, updates on the numbers since yesterday. I think you know these already, but just to make sure we're all speaking the same language. Based on information from yesterday, three additional cases identified. As the first deputy mayor is going to clarify in a moment, the when we find out about a case and when the case occurred can be two different things. So, you're going to help explain that reality. My friends in the media, please don't be on a cell phone during this portion. If you need to take your calls, please go outside.

So, three additional cases identified, two additional deaths reported. A total now of 100 cases and 10 deaths – again, all from the same area in the South Bronx. Now, we remain confident that the source of these current cases has been remediated. We remain confident that the source is among the five locations that were identified and remediated. But today, we're going to take additional steps to protect our fellow New Yorkers. We'll issuing a commissioner order from Dr. Bassett to anyone who owns or manages or otherwise controls a building with a cooling tower – and I want to emphasize at the outset, the vast majority of buildings in New York City did not have these cooling towers. They tend to be found in bigger, more modern buildings. But any building that does have one of these cooling towers will be subject to this order. This order instructs the owners or managers to test and disinfect their cooling tower within the next 14 days. Failure to comply with the commissioner's order is a misdemeanor. We are doing this out of an abundance of caution. Everyone understands that the outbreak has been limited to one community in our city. But we're doing this out of an abundance of caution, again, confident that we have already disinfected the source of this outbreak.

As we talked about the other day, we have been in close coordination with the state, and the state Department of Health, and Center for Disease Control. And we have been making all of our plans in regular consultation with them. I want to thank the state and the state Department of Health in particular. They are offering free testing for building owners. We appreciate that effort and we appreciate the work we're doing together on the test of the samples that were already taken. As we established the other day, those samples take a while to be tested. That is the only testing methodology that is reliable at this moment. The state has been doing those tests and we thank them for their coordination with us.

As I turn, first to the first deputy mayor, I think it's very important to note the trajectory we see now, in terms of the cases. And we're going to go over this chart. First deputy mayor is also going to talk about the rate of discharge of people who have become sick. We'll turn to the health commissioner, and then take your questions.

[...]

Mayor: Before turning to the commissioner, just to emphasize – so, this outbreak, and obviously I'm speaking as a layman but I want to put this in simple terms. This outbreak has been consistent. We obviously feel deeply

for every family who has lost someone and all those going through the illness now. It is encouraging that so many people who did contract this illness have been treated and have been discharged. And I think it's important to note that fact. The number, again, discharged?

First Deputy Mayor Anthony Shorris: 53 discharged.

Mayor: 53. So, a majority of people who have encountered this illness, have now been cleared. It's also important to recognize that the consistency with which this has affected a particular area and a particular kind of person with underlying challenges. Over the last few days, everything we continue to receive in the way of information confirms what we saw a few days ago. We're not finding new contaminated sources. We're not finding contamination outside the area. We are seeing, obviously, as the first deputy mayor explained, a reduction in the number of cases, even though there's a lag in the reporting. If you look at this chart, it's important to recognize that the situation is changing and changing for the better.

At the same time, we're acting very aggressively, out of an abundance of caution citywide – the commissioner will talk about that in a moment – and in the area that's been affected in the South Bronx, we will continue to look for any cooling tower that may not have been reported and we will literally, immediately inspect it and disinfect it. Again, out of an abundance of caution, but so far, no report has led to the identification of a tower with a new problem.

We clearly will move, not only in the immediate vain through the commissioner's order, but we look forward next week working with our colleagues in the City Council. And we've had very constructive conversations with the council members, with Speaker Mark-Viverito, and her staff. We're confident that there will be a substantial action next week, legislatively, that will help to address this issue for the long term. I think I can safely say we have never seen a situation like this before in New York City or of course, these efforts would have been in place in advance. But they will now be in place very, very rapidly. Turn to Health Commissioner Mary Bassett.

[...]

Mayor: Okay, so we're going to do questions on this topic. Then, we're going to stop again for a moment and we're going to go to other topics. On this topic –

Question: Why is this the worst outbreak in history? What is it that's made this so much worse than every single other one?

Commissioner Bassett: Well, that – that's a very – it's not the largest outbreak in history in the world. There have been –

Question: I meant in New York [inaudible].

Mayor: No, New York. New York.

Commissioner Bassett: But in New York City, it certainly is. And that's a question, of course, that we are asking ourselves. And I'm not sure that we'll ever fully understand it, but we do know that we have identified cooling towers that completely explain the pattern of the outbreak that we've seen. So we are fully confident that these cooling towers that have been identified, tested, and remediated were the – were the source of this – of this outbreak. It's consistent with all the information that we have. And we look forward to seeing a decline in cases.

Mayor: Yeah.

Question: Mayor, how much coordination have you had or are you having with the state? Did the governor reach out to you personally? Did you guys talk on the phone?

Mayor: Yeah, no, there's been regular coordination both between me and the governor and the state health commissioner and the city health commissioner, our staffs in general – very consistent communication and I think great coordination and great agreement on the course of action. I again want to thank state for the work they're doing with the testing of the samples we have so far. And for their willingness to help building owners with financial support for the testing process.

On this topic. Yes.

Question: Is there any common denominator between these cooling towers? I mean, same manufacturer, same people –

Commissioner Bassett: No.

Question: cleaning or maintaining them –

Commissioner Bassett: No.

Mayor: Okay, on topic, yes.

Question: The family of James [inaudible], a Bronx teacher who died in April of Legionnaires' disease, they said they felt the city didn't really investigate his case properly. Is there anything the commissioner can tell me about that instance or what the –

Commissioner Bassett: We don't discuss individual patients personal medical information.

Question: But I asked about the case – I don't want to know about his personal history, but did you – did the city investigate after the [inaudible]?

Commissioner Bassett: Let me just go back to reminding all of us that we see between 200 and 300 cases of Legionnaires' disease. This is a common cause of pneumonia. We institute outbreak investigations when we see a cluster of cases. And that's what happened in the South Bronx areas. So, again, we don't talk about individual patients.

Question: So you only investigate if there's a cluster, not [inaudible]?

Commissioner Bassett: We – we – yes.

Question: [inaudible] in the Bronx, so he [inaudible] caught it in that area.

Commissioner Bassett: I understand.

Mayor: I'm going to just attempt a layman's explanation – and doctor, you'll correct me if you disagree. We take every death seriously in this city, whether it's, as we were talking about a moment ago, people who die as a result of crime or for other reasons. But that doesn't mean that there's necessarily a pattern to follow. As the commissioner said, if several hundred people get this form of pneumonia each year – there are other forms of pneumonia, there are many other diseases – for us to swing in with our health apparatus, we need something to follow. So I don't know the individual case at all and, you know, again, the commissioner's right to not speak about the specific details, but what we know in this case is we have a pattern that we can follow and we can act on, and that's why we're doing it.

Emily first.

Question: I heard you say that failure to comply with the commissioner's order will result in a misdemeanor, but without a [inaudible] list of buildings that have the cooling towers, how would you enforce [inaudible]?

Commissioner Bassett: In this case, we are asking the – these are cooling towers that are scattered throughout our city, mostly, as the mayor said, in commercial and industrial settings, not in – they're not located generally in individual small apartment buildings. The owners are being asked to clean their cooling towers if they haven't been cleaned in the last 30 days, and to retain the records of this maintenance so that it will be available on inspection at our request.

Question: Just – I don't know – sorry if you already said this, but how many – do we know many towers – ?

Commissioner Bassett: We don't. And – and that's, as you know, been something that we've been talking about as an issue. But we do know that there are at least 2,500 cooling towers that we have a list of now, and we're actively adding to that list through a number of ways.

Question: So my question was, though, do you think there are – are there enough consultants who can do all this work within [inaudible]?

Commissioner Bassett: We have over 50 people out in the neighborhoods of the Bronx where we want to be sure that we've identified every single cooling tower, seeking to identify them. And we are going to use the – the – sort of, the broad net of commercial buildings to reach out to owners.

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Bassett: This is a citywide effort. It's a preventive effort to ensure that we know that every cooling tower in this city is in good maintenance.

Mayor: So just – let me do another frame, and then back to the commissioner – just – I'll pass the ball back to you. This is a small minority of the buildings in the city. As the first deputy mayor and the commissioner said, this is generally speaking not single-family houses, not, you know, small houses, multiple, not smaller apartment buildings. This tends to be larger buildings – commercial buildings. So we do know it is a clear minority of the building in this city. We wish we had a perfect list. And had there been any precipitating event previously that would've required such a list, we would certainly have it today, and sadly, this is that event. And that is why we look forward to working with the City Council on legislation next week that – although the details are being worked through – will require some kind of registration process around these cooling towers. In terms of your question, are there enough consultants to achieve this mission in the timeframe, the commissioner talked about our own city employees, what they're doing now, but in terms of – I'll ask both my colleagues – in terms of those in the private sector, well the one thing to say is the test itself is a – and the first deputy mayor's talked to me about this – relatively simple, cheap thing to do. The remediation is more complicated, but in terms of the available professional services to do this, could you both speak to that?

Commissioner Bassett: Yes, I misunderstood your question. I think you were asking, are there enough companies out there who can conduct maintenance and cleaning? And we are at – we are – expect – we fully expect that there are, and of course, as you all know, the market often responds to demand.

First Deputy Mayor Shorris: I would actually just that many of these buildings are conducting versions of these tests all the time on a routine basis anyway. Responsible building owners of large complexes are certainly doing this. Many institutions are already required to do it for other reasons. So it's not as if this is a brand new issue for most building owners. It's the responsible thing to do.

Mayor: And the commissioner's order makes clear – if a building has done such testing in the last, I think, 30 days, they don't have to retest. They do have to make sure any issues are addressed, but as long as they have documentation of that, they will not have to test again.

On this topic. Yes.

Question: Does City Hall have a cooling tower?

Mayor: Does City Hall have a cooling tower? Very smart question. I know the first deputy mayor will know the answer.

Commissioner Bassett: [inaudible], if you do, you'll get a letter [laughs].

First Deputy Mayor Shorris: The city DCAS is going through the inventory of all the city buildings, so – this building included – to make sure that if there is a tower, it's checked. So if it is, it's already been checked.

Mayor: But why don't we agree that you'll get an answer quite shortly to that very good question?

Commissioner Bassett: I can tell you that we have tested several city buildings in the area of the outbreak in the Bronx.

Mayor: Correct. We will – we will get DCAS on the phone immediately so you'll know what's going on at your workplace.

Okay. Yes.

Question: Is there a test or does it exist or is it being done to determine if there's a certain level of this bacteria that then causes the disease? I mean can this just infiltrate a lot of these cooling towers if it's just at a low level?

Mayor: Well, I'm just going to start with the obvious and then pass to the commissioner. Again, let's – let's imagine the number of cooling towers in New York City is – you know, it might be in the single-digit-thousands, it might be in the tens-of-thousands. We don't know until we do this whole process, but it's a finite number. It's – and obviously buildings all over the five boroughs. We've never seen an outbreak like this. It stands to reason that there is no such trigger, if you will – that nothing like this has happened on this kind of level, and we've had these cooling towers for a long time in a lot of places. So I think what's happening here very well may be quite isolated – again, as we all suspect, a single source – that for whatever reason wasn't handled properly – and we – that's going to be part of the ongoing investigation. But, you know, if cooling towers in general were a problem, you would have this problem all over the country, all over the city, for a long – for many, many years. This is something much more narrow. Commissioner, you want to add?

Commissioner Bassett: I think you were asking about testing, and I think I should make clear for everyone that maintenance doesn't – cleaning maintenance doesn't require testing. People can – will simply be cleaning and decontaminating. The state has made available testing for all owners who would like to do it at their labs. This would not be the routine maintenance that we are looking forward to providing oversight for on behalf of the city – that with the cooling towers bill that will be put through, I hope, by our colleagues in the City Council. And you were asking, do we know what level of contamination poses a public health threat? And I – that's a very good question, and the answer is the obvious one – that it seems plausible that the higher the level of contamination, the more likely the public health threat, and that of course has gone into our thinking about looking at our data in the Bronx, but there is no level that – that we can say to you is the threshold, the cut point.

Mayor: Okay, last call on this topic. Seeing none, okay – whoa – man, that was the latest I've ever gotten one. Go ahead.

Question: [inaudible] clarification – if a building owner refuses to comply or doesn't [inaudible], what kind of penalties [inaudible]?

Commissioner Bassett: The commissioner's orders can invoke either fines or in – going as far as asking that you shut down the operation of the unit.

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Bassett: That – that [inaudible] can tell you right now.

Mayor: And just to clarify –

Commissioner Bassett: There's a – yeah – go ahead.

Mayor: You start.

Commissioner Bassett: No, please.

Mayor: Okay, as – you know, there is a powerful parallel here. When we have – it's winter and a building owner doesn't provide heat to their tenants, there are penalties for that. We are all aware of the fact that some building owners still don't provide heat, even knowing that there will be penalties. In that instance, the city goes in itself, fixes the boiler, and charges the building owner. So a similar dynamic here – we expect, obviously, the vast majority of building owners to cooperate. There would be no need for fines, there would no need to shut down a building. If we have to, we'll do that, but we also stand ready to step in and do our own testing and cleaning if need be.

Okay, last, last call on this topic. We are done with this topic. Thank you both. You'll – see you in a little bit for another thing. Okay. Thank you both. You can stay or you can go, whatever you'd like. Okay, we are going to do a few – it's been a long time and we're going to have another availability coming up in less than an hour, correct? Correct?

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Okay. In less than an hour, I'm telling you, so – but I'll take a few. Go ahead.

Question: Mr. Mayor, state test scores are expected to be [inaudible]. Any insight into how the city will do and how much are you going to see the results as a measure of your performance, and especially with some of the, you know, high-profile programs, such as the renewal schools [inaudible]?

Mayor: Look, we – we need to see those scores before we can conjecture about them. We need to hear a formal report from the state, and I can't comment on that. I will simply say, it's one of the things we judge ourselves by. It's not the only thing. I've always said, you know – I want to be consistent – I believe in multiple measures, right down the individual student in the individual school. I think that's true for us as well, but it will certainly be one of the things we judge our work by.

Question: Mr. Mayor, in Kips Bay there are several mens' shelters. A lot of people in that community say the city is ignoring the problem of homeless men doing inappropriate things [inaudible]. They've started an app, called Map the Homeless. People are taking pictures of some of these men doing inappropriate things and then pinpointing it on the map so other people in the community know about it. Are you aware of this? And do you think it's appropriate? I'm not aware of the mapping. I am very aware of the fact that we have some facilities there that we're very conscientious about beefing up security for and support for the community. So NYPD is working much more closely with those facilities. And as I've experienced myself, and I urge any New Yorker who sees someone who is homeless and is causing any kind of problem, to call into 3-1-1. There's a very effective response system that leads to very quick results. So I – I haven't seen this, so I can't comment on it, but I can say the right thing to do is if you see someone violating a law, if you see someone in any way doing something inappropriate, call 3-1-1 and report it, and there will be a follow-up. As Commissioner Bratton has said, in a free society, there is no law against sitting on a park bench, minding your own business. There is no

law against standing outside a grocery store and asking for spare change. It may not be something we love, but it's not, per se, illegal. There are laws – there are laws against in any way menacing people, blocking the ability of the public to move around, any kind of violent or aggressive behavior, and those will be dealt with as criminal justice matters. We do not allow any kind of encampments to occur. So that's where people need to call 3-1-1 if it's something that's non-violent, but inappropriate. Obviously, if an act of violence is underway, people need to call 9-1-1, but those will be responded to promptly.

Question: [inaudible] College of Staten Island is going to conduct a study on whether or not Staten Island is receiving a fair share of city services. I was wondering, first, whether or not you think a study like this is necessary? And whether or not you're concerned at all about what the results might be?

Mayor: I think this is a question that we face in a democracy as well, always. I think any borough, any neighborhood has every right to ask what kind of support they're getting. I think what we should be careful to do is look objectively at the reality, because no two boroughs, no two neighborhoods are the same. But if people want to do that analysis, I welcome it. And we'll certainly look at it.

Question: Mayor, [inaudible]

Mayor: You know, I think – well, look at what we're talking about here today. We just talked about an unprecedented effort to address mental health and violence problems. We're obviously doing an overwhelming response to the Legionnaires' situation. This is what we are here to do. And all the things I said at the outset of the previous remarks – the 200,000 units of affordable housing, efforts to bring down crime across the city, which are working – that's what we're here to do. Public opinion polls are not what I'm focused on. I'm focused on that work. Go ahead – anyone else over here? Yeah.

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Question: All – the three new cases, also all in the South Bronx, just [inaudible] –

Mayor: Everything is still in the same area.

Thanks, everyone.

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