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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, FDNY COMMISSIONER NIGRO, AND OEM  
COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO DELIVER UPDATE ON EAST VILLAGE BUILDING COLLAPSE**

***\*\*\*Complete transcript below\*\*\****

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** We want to give you an update about the tragedy that's occurred here at 2nd Avenue and 7th Street. Everything we're going to tell you is preliminary, based on the information we have at this moment. Obviously, investigation underway – a lot of information being gathered, so we'll be giving you regular updates.

I'd like to first acknowledge and thank for joining us Fire Commissioner Dan Nigro, OEM Commissioner Esposito, NYPD Commissioner Bratton, our first deputy commissioner – our First Deputy Mayor Tony Shorris, Buildings Commissioner Chandler, CAU Commissioner Carrion, HPD Commissioner Been. We have with us the president of Con Ed Craig Ivey. I'd also like to thank the elected officials who have joined us – Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Council Member Rosie Mendez, and Senator Brad Hoylman. Others will be joining us.

The explosion here in the East Village affected four buildings. They are 119, 121, 123 and 125 2nd Avenue. The actual explosion occurred in 121, caused it to partially collapse, and 123 collapsed as well.

Preliminary evidence suggests a gas-related explosion. That investigation is ongoing. The initial impact appears to have been caused by plumbing and gas work that was occurring inside 121 2nd Avenue. FDNY and all our first responders have responded. It is now a seven-alarm incident for FDNY, so they've been battling heavy fire conditions – so far, have contained the fire those four buildings. That's an ongoing operation. And again, elements of FDNY, NYPD, OEM, DOB, HPD, and of course Con Ed are all at the scene.

We have the Department of Environmental Protection hazmat operation responding to check for the environmental impact and the health impact. The health department has information on its website regarding any health risk related to smoke – that's [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health).

A reception station has been set up at PS 63 – PS 63 at 121 East Third Street. This is a Red Cross site now to support residents of the buildings, neighbors, family members.

We want everyone to know you can call 3-1-1. If you want to report someone who may be missing or if you want to check on the access of someone who has been identified so far, you can call 3-1-1.

At this moment, we know of 12 individuals who are injured, three of whom are in critical condition. Now, again, this is a constantly evolving situation, so this is preliminary information. 12 individuals confirmed injured in this incident, three in critical condition.

Our thoughts and our prayers are with every one of them and their families. And of course, we are praying that no other individuals are found injured, and that there are no fatalities, but that is an ongoing effort that FDNY and all other first responders are involved in.

I want to also commend the FDNY. This is a complex and difficult operation they're mounting here, obviously doing everything they can to search for anyone who still may be in those buildings, but also to ensure that there's not spread of fire to the surrounding buildings. And the FDNY, as usual, is doing an extraordinary job handling this very, very difficult situation.

Just a few words in Spanish and then I'll turn to Commissioner Nigro and Commissioner Esposito.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, I'd like to call up our fire commissioner, Dan Nigro, to give you a further update.

**Commissioner Daniel Nigro, FDNY:** Thank you, mayor. And I would say it is a seventh alarm and there are approximately 250 of our members here on the scene. This first call came in at 17 minutes after 3, and our members arrived in less than three minutes to a scene they certainly didn't expect – to see that this explosion blew the front of 121 across the street. They, for the first 15 minutes, before the building started to collapse, made extremely dangerous searches of these buildings to search for any victims, and were forced out by the subsequent collapse of 123 and 121. Right now, we are fighting a fire in 119, which was fully involved in fire that extended after the explosion. And that building is in danger of possible collapse, which is why we have that area cleared. We will be here for a very long night, and we will keep the area secure and keep our members and the public, of course, out of that possible collapse zone.

**Mayor:** Thank you, commissioner. Now, before I turn to Commissioner Esposito, I just want to thank the Speaker of the New York City Council, Melissa Mark-Viverito, for joining us. I'd now like to present our emergency management commissioner, Joe Esposito.

**Commissioner Joseph Esposito, OEM:** Thank you, Mayor. The mayor and Dan Nigro talked on the majority of the issues, but again, just a reminder – the school is open, P.S. 63, that's a relocation center. We have people there, the Red Cross has people there. If you have issues with housing, go there, and we will find locations for you. At this type of incident, it's always – environmentally, we have concerns about the air. We put out a message about what to do – keep your windows closed as much as possible while the fire is on. If you have any kind of concern – if you are asthmatic, any kind of medical needs, please, if you feel any distress, call 9-1-1 immediately. But again, keep your windows closed and limit your time outside as much as possible. We'll be dealing with the debris. We have a debris task force in place. We're trying to give rid of debris as fast as possible also.

**Mayor:** Thank you very much. We'll take questions now. Jonathan.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, do [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** At this moment, we have no reports of additional missing persons, thank God, and that's an evolving situation. And again, that 3-1-1 call is crucial – if anyone does know of someone missing, we need them to call 3-1-1 and tell us. But as of at least a few minutes ago, we had no reports of any additional people who were believed to be missing.

Yeah.

**Question:** Two-part question [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Yeah.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** I'm sorry. Dan.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**FDNY Commissioner Dan Nigro:** For the second question, I think it's still too early. What we do know is that some work was going on in the building at the time, prior to the explosion. When our members arrived, some of the folks had self-evacuated, of course, and they were taken care of – first aid – and we looked for additional victims.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Commissioner Nigro:** The majority of the people self-evacuated, yes.

**Mayor:** Sally?

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** The names of the contractors and plumbers – we're still working on identifying all the individuals and companies involved, so that's part of the ongoing investigation. But to the best of our understanding, they were all private companies – it's privately owned buildings, private companies working in one – in the building, in 121.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** It's just to the best of our knowledge.

**Commissioner Nigro:** To the best of our knowledge, they were working on the gas in the building. That was the work being done, and right now, the fire marshals and the police department are investigating with all of the people involved, and I'm sure by the end of tonight we'll know a lot more.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** I don't know if we have those details yet. Do you have, or –

**Commissioner Nigro:** We had two people with burns to their airways, and another person who had become unconscious following the event, and was declared in critical condition. I don't have a follow up on their condition right now.

**Question:** [inaudible] how concerned are you [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** This is – look, this is a very important moment in terms of assessing our situation, in terms of our buildings and infrastructure. But let me say, until we know what happened here, we cannot pass judgment. We need to fully investigate. We especially need to know if there was any indication of a gas leak, and if the individuals who sensed the leak did what they were supposed to do, and called 9-1-1 or Con Ed. So, until we have a further picture, we can't speculate. I will take this occasion to say, as we said many times after the East Harlem tragedy – any time you smell gas, you need to call 9-1-1 immediately, or call Con Ed immediately. There's no reason to debate, there's no reason to delay – that call needs to go in immediately.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** On the second question, that's what the investigation will have to yield. We can't speculate until we have gone through the investigation. The first question?

**Commissioner Nigro:** The majority of those injured were injured right at the moment of the explosion, yes. Correct.

**Mayor:** I'd like to also acknowledge and thank our Public Advocate Tish James for joining us.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** At this moment, based on evaluation done by the city, and by Con Ed, we have no indication of any calls having been received regarding a gas leak.

**Question:** [inaudible] inside the building [inaudible]?

**Commissioner Nigro:** We believe they were inside the building.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Commissioner Nigro:** Do not know – assume they were workers, but we do not know that yet.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Okay, hold on, hold on, everyone will get a chance. Go ahead?

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Con Edison was at the building earlier. You want to do that, or you want – Con Ed? You want to go over it? Con Ed President Craig Ivey.

**Con Ed President Craig Ivey:** We were at the building earlier today – 2 pm approximately, preliminarily. We were evaluating the meter installation for a new service that was going to be installed to the building. There was also a second existing service there.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Con Ed President Ivey:** The new installation did not pass our inspection at that time, so it meant it wasn't ready for gas to be introduced.

**Mayor:** In other words, it's a private building – hold on a second – private building where private contractors are doing work. The preliminary report, because we're still waiting to get the full download from the Con Ed crew, is that they observed the work, it did not pass inspection, they gave further instruction. That was earlier this afternoon, but again, we are not going to speculate on details until we have a full report.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** How many people evacuated? Do you have a sense – either one of you?

**Commissioner Nigro:** The number we have are 12 persons that were injured. We don't know exactly, because some of them haven't been spoken to, where they came from in the buildings, but that all we can say is there are 12 victims.

**Mayor:** Any non-injured evacuated? No? Okay.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** That's what we're waiting for an investigation on. I understand you guys rightfully are trying to get all the facts quickly, but we want to make sure they are the facts. So an investigation is going on. The authorities here have to debrief the Con Ed workers who were at the site. But the initial preliminary information is Con Ed inspectors arrived at the site earlier for a separate reason entirely, found the work to be unacceptable, gave instructions as to what changes were needed – and that was an hour or more before the explosion.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Again, there was work going on in the building. We believe it may have been gas and plumbing, but until we have full information we can't confirm that.

**Phil Walzak:** A couple more please.

**Mayor:** Couple more, couple more – last call. Hold on. You go first, then you – go ahead.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** We're not certain. We're not certain until we do the investigation – that's the point. We're trying very carefully not to give you information that proves to be false – so, preliminary information in all cases, investigation underway to get you final facts.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** As I said earlier, no indication previous to the actual explosion of any call having been placed reporting a gas leak to either 9-1-1 or Con Ed. So, 9-1-1 system, we checked calls; Con Ed checked their calls. No calls have been received in advance of the incident.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Hold on – one here, and then you.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Again, we'll get them fuller details after, but see if you can give them the –

**Con Ed President Ivey:** Again, that's an existing service they were upgrading to a larger service. So the inspection today was to evaluate the metering installation for the larger service – and preliminarily did not pass that inspection at 2 o'clock.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Con Ed President Ivey:** As I understand it, very preliminarily, gas was introduced to the head of service, which is just inside the wall of the building, and it was [inaudible].

**Mayor:** So, again, until we have further detail, we've got to put those pieces together.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** When did the work start in the building? I'm not sure if we know exactly that. Do we know when this – okay, we have to confirm that. And had Con Ed inspected previously recently to the best of our knowledge? Do we know or do we have to find out?

**Con Ed President Ivey:** We would have to find out.

**Mayor:** Okay, we'll have to find that out.

**Phil Walzak:** Okay, last call guys.

**Mayor:** Last call. Going once. Yes –

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Not at this moment – correct?

**Commissioner Nigro:** Not at this moment.

**Mayor:** Thank God – none injured at this moment.

Yes – last call.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Again, we need to get the facts about what happened here. We're obviously concerned to make sure if there's anything we can learn from this incident that we address it. But what we do know for sure, while we're waiting for all of the facts, is – and I'm asking you all to emphasize this in your reporting – if people smell gas, they should immediately call either 9-1-1 or Con Edison. That's the one thing we know for sure. Thank you, everyone.

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