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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS UPDATE ON MANHATTAN STEAM
PIPE EXPLOSION**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Okay, I want to give – I want to give everyone an update. As you know at 6:39 am there was a steam line rupture on Fifth Avenue and 21st Street. We know from the original instant that thank God no one was seriously injured at the time. In the hour since the incident we do not have any reports of serious injuries. But we're also very concerned about the material that was part of the steam line. Testing took place after the rupture and we have the results back from those tests done by Con Edison and our City Department of Environmental Protection.

There was Asbestos in the steam line casing. That's obviously a real concern to us. So we've confirmed the presence of Asbestos. We have also tested the air since the time of the incident. The air cleared fairly quickly after the incident. So the air in this area now is safe, there is no meaningful presence of Asbestos in the air at this point. But our concern is the debris that was thrown off by the rupture. Some of that is still visible on the street and on the building facades, that all needs to be cleaned up.

There is real concern about whether any debris entered into buildings or into air conditioning systems. So there is going to be thorough assessment to make sure that all the buildings are clean and safe. Let me give you a sense of that will mean for the next few days for people in this community.

So the core area of Fifth Avenue between 19th and 22nd Street is closed off to traffic now. That will continue to be closed off most likely for the next few days. So figure we're going into Saturday or Sunday before the streets are reopened based on what we know now, and that could change. I want to emphasize that our health officials, our environmental officials including both our city officials and the state, the State Health Commissioner Doctor Zucker is here with us as well. We are going to consistently assess the situation that might change our time lines up or down. But right now the assumption is that these streets will be closed off for several days.

We'll then need to get into the buildings to give them a close look. There are 28 buildings in the area of greatest concerns, a concern 49 buildings overall that we're looking at. And we need to check each building before they can go back to their normal functioning. Whether it's residential

or office, we need to thoroughly check them, particularly being concerned about those HVAC systems. Our Department of Environmental Protection, our Health Department will be leading that effort.

We have to also wash down the streets just to make sure there is no contamination that might cause any ongoing impact. Again brief exposure is not a problem through the air. But if this material is in a building, if it's on clothing that is a real concern. We do not want anything that might cause repeated exposure. We have just broad instructions that anyone who feels that their clothing was contaminated. There's a specific protocol, my colleagues can talk about it. But to make sure that people remove the clothing, bag it up; bring it to a ConEd site which has been established at 22nd and Broadway. We want that clothing turned in. If there's evidence of material on the clothing, it looks like the debris and the dust is still visible on the clothing. We want that clothing turned in. And ConEd will compensate people in appropriate fashion.

We want anyone who thinks they're exposed to get out of that clothing, shower, clean, put on new clothing. That's out of an abundance of caution. Again, we believe that temporary brief exposure is generally not a problem, but we want to treat this with a lot of caution. So one other point, or two other points I should say.

One is for people who live and work in these buildings we are going to do our best to help them get back in as soon as possible. I think the most likely scenario is it's going to be a couple of days. Perhaps some of the buildings farther from the site might be opened up as soon as this evening but that's only a possibility. More likely is it will take two days or more to really clear the buildings and be confident that people can go back in. If people have particular, urgent needs, such as medicines they left in their apartment, or a pet who was left in an apartment, FDNY and NYPD will help address those issues and can send properly trained, properly equipped officers into those apartment but people will not be let into their apartment until we have cleared their buildings. So again I think in the likely hood that is going to take a couple of days and obviously alternative arrangements, we are going to do all we can to help people have a place to stay if they cannot go back to their building.

Lastly, just want to thank all of the agencies represented here, you got a wide range of city agencies and our state partners and ConEd. As you ask questions we will have the appropriate person come up and introduce themselves. The first responders from FDNY and NYPD were here in a matter of minutes and were addressing the situation. Thank God this happened so early in the morning that there were many fewer people present than would normally be at that intersection if it were to have happened even just a couple of hours later. So that was a helpful factor in a tough situation. But our first responders did an outstanding job and really quickly secured the area, made sure people were safe and I want to thank all of them for that and all the agencies.

I'll conclude by saying everything is now under investigation if your question might be what caused this, I'm going to tell you up front we do not have that answer. That is a matter for investigation as soon as we have results of that investigation, of course we will share them. We do not have that answer now it's just a few hours into this incident. So let's dispense with that

question right up front. And other information is still being gathered but if you have questions on some of the things I've said we welcome them now. Yes.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Right.

Question: [Inaudible] can you tell them if anyone of these agencies can help with that [inaudible]?

Mayor: Let me answer and maybe if Buildings Department wants to add anything, I asked a similar question. No agency or utility was doing any work at the exact site in the days before. So I don't know if there was a permit that at some point might be used because sometimes a permit is filed but not acted on. But there was no work at this immediate site in recent proximity to this event.

Question: [Inaudible] on that corner.

Mayor: If ConEd or Buildings, anyone want to answer that? Or Joe, go ahead?

Commissioner Joseph Esposito, Office of Emergency Management: That permit was for a water main, they want to work on the water main which is across the avenue from where the steam pipe was. So that permit and that work appears right now to have nothing to do with the steam rupture.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: That's a very good question and as I start, Doctor Palacio, my Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services and Doctor Bassett, our Health Commissioner will come up and Doctor Zucker is welcome as well. Look, I'm going to the laymen and you'll hear from the doctors. Temporary, airborne exposure, although we take everything seriously, generally, one time exposure is not a problem. The challenge is anything that might cause repeated exposure. That's why we are concerned about any fibers that got into clothing or into HVAC systems or any debris that might still be present in or around a building, but one time brief exposure, generally not a problem. Doctors come on in.

Deputy Mayor Herminia Palacio, Health and Human Services: Yes again, as the Mayor said, very, very low risk of any health impact from the limited one time exposure. We take all potential exposure to asbestos very seriously and the important thing is the very careful examination and cleanup that will follow, as the Mayor said, reduce any risk of sort of ongoing long term exposure to asbestos fibers.

Mayor: So the other thing I would add is I really need people to take seriously that point, if it might have gotten on your clothing, get that clothing off, bag it up, take a shower, hand in that clothing. I hate to say it – if anyone was wearing expensive clothing at that moment, but if it's

got fibers in it, you're not going to see that clothing again. It needs to be handed in and isolated. Again, Con Ed will work on compensation.

Yes?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: That's an excellent question, and I don't know if we have the final count –

Unknown: We're researching it right now.

Mayor: We are researching now. A lot of them have a residential component at least. Some of them are mixed, obviously, but let me confirm – it's 28, plus 49; or 28 –

Unknown: The total universe is 49 –

Mayor: 49 – okay, getting that right. 49 is the total universe; 28 in what they call the hot zone; and, therefore, 21 in the warm zone where there's less likelihood of a problem.

Question: Did you go to the gym this morning, sir?

Mayor: Yes, sir. I did my normal routine this morning.

Question: Why didn't you come earlier? Right after the [inaudible]?

Mayor: The information we had initially was – and I said this up at the Bronx at my previous event – no injuries – no major injuries, situation under control, no ongoing challenge of a further rupture. We only got the results back that indicated the asbestos present while I was up at the press conference in the Bronx. So, in this kind of situation, I ask this question of all these experts – asbestos has actually been removed from a lot of this type of steam line over the years. So, there was no assumption that asbestos was present, only when the tests came back did we know we had that problem.

Yeah, go ahead –

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: I'll let the doctors answer. I think the answer is basically no, but feel free –

Deputy Mayor Palacio: So, I think people should have the –

Mayor: Loud –

Deputy Mayor Palacio: People wearing face masks inside the hot zone is appropriate – those are people who are trained on the use of protective equipment. You see us here outside without

face masks. I think that's a signal of the level of risk that we perceive from just walking around the neighborhood.

Mayor: Juliet – hold on – Juliet?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: So, let me – two parts I want to raise in that. First of all, health and safety first – we're going to work from an abundance of caution. Now that we know there's asbestos present, we're not going to cut any corners, we're going to be very thorough. So, if a small business, if there's any possibility that that material got in, we want to make sure it's thoroughly clean. Now, we have a variety of experts here, if they go into a business and they're convinced there's no exposure, there will be a timeline for when they can reopen, depending on whatever else is happening with the first responders. On the compensation question, let me get Con Ed up here to talk about how they'll do compensation for a small business, for example.

President Tim Cawley, Consolidated Edison: Sure – Tim Cawley, Con Edison. So, for both homeowners and businesses, if there are claims – we are at 22nd and Broadway, and you can also go to our internet site and determine a way to work with our folks to process claims.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Anyone know that? No, we do not have that yet. We're still working on it.

A few more – go ahead.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Subway is running fine. MTA is here and can answer any specifics, but the subway is running fine. No impact – subway is running on a normal schedule. Obviously, it will affect bus, traffic, but the bottom line is, assume disruption of normal traffic. Like I said, we're going to work from an abundance of caution, and when all of the agencies give the all clear, we'll start to reopen streets. But right now, I think it's going to be a couple of days before you get any real traffic.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: How long? Well, first they've got to clean up all of the materials. Before we worry about the crater, it's making sure the contaminants are taken account of and taken out of circulation. To actually fix the crater and get ready to open the street, who wants to speak to that?

Anyone got a sense?

President Cawley: So, the immediate focus is cleaning the street and getting some normalcy back to the area. We'll assess what the damage is, what the repair to the steam main will entail, and have a better estimate once we get our eyes on the pipe.

Question: [Inaudible]

President Cawley: Roughly 20 by 15 – very rough.

Mayor: So, I just want to say to everyone, there will be updates throughout the day as we get more information. So, rest assured, you'll be hearing a lot more.

Go ahead –

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Yes, all 49 evacuated. And until there is a specific determination that a building is safe, we're not letting people back in. Again, if they have a particular emergency need, a first responder with proper gear can go in for them. No one is going into a building until Health Department, Fire Department, Police Department, etcetera authorize a building to be reopened. The possibility in some of those warm-zone buildings, that could be tonight. More likely we're talking a day or two is the earliest for these buildings.

Thanks, everyone. We'll get you updates later.

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