

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#22-17

**NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ANNOUNCES NEW SAFETY INITIATIVES TO
RAISE AWARENESS AHEAD OF THE 2017 ATLANTIC HURRICANE SEASON**

City unveils new coastal storm evacuation route signs in Queens to direct residents to higher ground in the event of a coastal storm

New “Know Your Zone” ads feature tips from Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers

May 12, 2017 — The New York City Emergency Management Department today announced new safety initiatives to increase public awareness ahead of the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season. The department unveiled new coastal storm evacuation route signs in Howard Beach, Queens, to increase year-round awareness of hurricane risks and direct residents living within hurricane evacuation zones to higher ground. NYC Emergency Management also announced the launch of new “Know Your Zone” ads, which feature personal preparedness tips from CERT volunteers who live in hurricane evacuations zones.

“The new initiatives encourage New Yorkers to make a plan ahead of a storm,” said **NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito**. “The coastal evacuation route signs give New Yorkers clear direction toward safety if they are ordered to evacuate during a coastal storm.”

During the 2016 Atlantic hurricane season, the NYC Emergency Management Department introduced new coastal evacuation route signs as part of a pilot program in Staten Island. This year, the department has expanded the initiative to hurricane evacuation zones throughout Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. The new coastal storm evacuation signs replace older signs that directed drivers to specific evacuation centers along a designated route. The new signs accommodate for New York City’s unique, dense, coastal street grid and encourage use of many streets rather than specific routes. The increased number of signs within evacuation zones throughout the city provides more year-round public awareness of storm hazards in at-risk areas, along with clearer direction toward higher ground outside of evacuation zones in the event of a storm. NYC Emergency Management worked collaboratively with the NYC Department of Transportation and New York City Police Department to develop the new evacuation signage.

“The new coastal evacuation route signs are consistent with best practices in emergency management and are better adapted to the travel conditions that Queens residents would face during an evacuation,” said **Queens Borough President Melinda Katz**. “These signs should increase year-round awareness of hurricane risk and provide clearer paths to safety for residents if and when an evacuation is necessary. NYC Emergency Management, NYC DOT and the NYPD deserve to be commended for working together to develop and install this improved signage, which will help enhance the safety of Queens residents.”

“When Superstorm Sandy devastated New York, many residents in the evacuation zones were underprepared and confused,” said **Councilman Eric Ulrich**. “The increased number of signs within evacuation zones throughout the City provides more year-round public awareness of storm hazards in at-risk areas – like South Queens – as well as clearer direction toward higher ground outside of evacuation zones in the event of another storm.”

"Part of life in this beautiful part of the world is knowing how to evacuate at a moment's notice," says **NYS Assemblywoman Stacey Pheffer Amato**. “We saw some of the worst Mother Nature's ever thrown at us in 2012, and we're still recovering five years later. I appreciate NYC Emergency Management for their hard work to reinforce our community's resilience for the next time around. The best thing we can do is to plan and build appropriately. I encourage everyone to Know Your Zone, to study and use their evacuation routes, and to take advantage of NYC Emergency Management’s other great resources so that you and your family are protected."

“Community Board 10 appreciates the addition of more storm evacuation route signage within our district. Our experience during Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy clearly indicated a need for more and better signage. Strengthening awareness among our residents so that they are better prepared to take appropriate action during any disaster is a major goal for us. These signs are one way to help reach that goal,” said **Betty Braton, Chairperson Community Board 10**.

A 2017 Preparedness survey conducted by Global Strategy Group indicates that while 67 percent of New York City residents say they feel very or somewhat informed about what to do in the event of an emergency, one in four (25 percent) remain unsure about whether they live in a hurricane evacuation zone. In addition, the percentage of residents who say they live in an evacuation zone but cannot identify which zone they live in has increased by 7 points since a similar preparedness survey conducted in 2015 (2017: 57 percent don’t know, 2015: 50 percent didn’t know). To raise awareness before the upcoming hurricane season, NYC Emergency Management launched a new phase of the “*Know Your Zone*” hurricane awareness campaign to encourage New Yorkers to find out whether they live in one of the City’s six hurricane evacuation zones. This year, the new creative ads feature personal preparedness tips from CERT volunteers who live in zones 1 through 3. For example, Eleni, a Queens resident who lives in zone 1, shares her plan to “stay with friends if (she) must evacuate”, while Uthman, who also resides in zone 1, knows how to “find (his) zone and closest evacuation center.”

“Being prepared is the key to optimal survival. This includes our pets as well. Without the knowledge, Sandy would have been very dismal for my family and loved ones. Prepare, it saves lives,” said **Reverend Eleni Marudis**.

“As someone who has lived through Hurricane Sandy, it is important that you know your zone and have an emergency plan in place. And no, just winging it is not a good plan in an emergency,” said **Uthman Baksh**.

NYC Emergency Management will place the ads on bus shelters, Link NYC kiosks, and in print newspapers. New Yorkers can visit NYC.gov/knowyourzone to find their evacuation zone

designation and to get more information about how to prepare for hurricanes. The “*Know Your Zone*” campaign is also supported with updated advertising for the 2017 hurricane season through social media engagement (#knowyourzone), and community outreach (postcards and hurricane preparedness presentations in communities throughout the city). The new “*Know Your Zone*” campaign ads were designed by C&G Partners. “*Know Your Zone*” also has a dedicated web portal – NYC.gov/knowyourzone – with information about the city’s hurricane evacuation zones, hurricane hazards, and tips to prepare for storms.

Through the “*Know Your Zone*” campaign, NYC Emergency Management aims to reach the roughly three million New Yorkers living within the city’s hurricane evacuation zones, which were revised in 2013. Hurricane evacuation zones are based on coastal flood risk resulting from storm surge (the “dome” of ocean water that is pushed ashore by the winds and low barometric pressure of a hurricane), the geography of the city’s low-lying neighborhoods, and the accessibility of these neighborhoods by bridges and roads. The City may order residents who live in a zone to evacuate depending on a hurricane’s forecasted strength, track, and storm surge. If you are ordered to evacuate, do so as directed.

-30-

MEDIA CONTACT: Nancy Silvestri/Omar Bourne [\(718\) 422-4888](tel:7184224888)

STAY CONNECTED: Twitter: @NotifyNYC (emergency notifications)
@nycoem (emergency preparedness info)

Facebook: /NYCemergencymanagement