



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 16, 2018

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

TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON NY1'S MORNINGS ON 1

Pat Kiernan: Mayor Bill de Blasio is with me on the phone. Mayor de Blasio this is slush today but yesterday the city was at stand still.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Pat, it was horrible. I am upset the way everyone else is upset. I was out in the middle of traffic stuck with everyone else and it was a horrible experience and I totally understand why people are so frustrated from it. We had here – you know I don't want to use an overused phrase but we had something of a perfect storm, a bunch of things came together very suddenly, not just the weather. Obviously the closure of the George Washington Bridge – I certainly can't remember that happening previously you know in the middle of what seemed to be a pretty normal day. That really threw everything off. That had a horrible chain reaction on the entire city. So this was a bad, bad situation. There are definitely some things we need to learn from this and some things we need to do better but it is also important to note that you know we got just about every form of bad luck we could have gotten yesterday. The Weather Service reports changed radically late in the morning yesterday.

Kiernan: Yes, you didn't get a great forecast but we do have to be ready for the forecast to be wrong and it didn't seem like the plows got out there fast enough.

Mayor: No I think it is a little different and I'm the first to say look, we are going to do a full review of what happened here. I'm not happy with the end result obviously, it's unacceptable. That said I don't think it's as simple as one factor or another. I think this is a lot of factors that have to be analyzed and we have to figure what we can do better from this. The Sanitation Department over the last storms, including storms much, much bigger than this, did a stellar job. But I think one of X factors here is that we, I agree with you, we tend to take what the Weather Service says and then add more on out of an abundance of caution. The problem here was and we'll analyze it formerly, but Wednesday night the word was a couple of inches of snow. Nothing exceptional, nothing that people would feel a lot – changed late enough in Thursday that we were not in a position to do what we really needed to do which was tell people, do not drive. In the past, one of the reasons we've had success with much bigger storms, we had a 28 inch storm for God's sakes. And Sanitation did great. We told people well in advance stay off the roads, don't go to work, you know don't use your car, leave room for the plows.

This situation, the more I'm understanding from our agencies this morning, this situation was that when it finally became clear we were going to get very fast, intense, heavy, wet snow, rush hour was already beginning and all of the pieces were starting sort of bang into each other. Everything was starting to you know, have a multiplier effect in a very bad way. So I'm certain there's things we can learn and we can do better from this. I think number one thing is to give people warning, so I'm going to give people a warning right now – even though what we are hearing broadly around the city is much improved roads this morning, a little slow obviously because of the rain and slush and one thing or another. People should recognize that there's still, there are a lot trees that came down, which once a tree comes down that's a really tough situation, you cannot clear a tree quickly, that always takes time, a lot of other problems we are still dealing with. Today, if you have not gotten in your car and do not need to use your car for something, don't because there is still a lot of work to do on the roads. If you can leave early from work and get ahead of the rush hour, got on the early side of the rush hour, please do. I wish we had the information to tell people a lot more on Wednesday night, we simply didn't but that being said we have to do a better job, making adjustments even when we only have a few hours of warning.

Kiernan: You know, I think that was the situation at the Port Authority which was you had a full load of weekday commuters and people hadn't stayed away from the city, worked from home, so when the buses couldn't get in, you ended up with that terrible situation that we had at Port Authority. We were just looking at some video of crews trying to get trees out of the way. Again as you say because it was an early season storm, you've got green leaves on those trees, they are picking up every snowflake and you shouldn't have seen that many downed trees for a similar storm later in the season, but we really had it. The Parks Department cleans up the trees and the Sanitation Department cleans up the roads, did they work well together on this?

Mayor: Well you know on the overnight, a lot got done in terms of clearing the roads, so Sanitation, I mean you know I've had to learn this through a variety of storms, you know Sanitation can do miracles if they have clear, the freedom to get out there and work the roads. They can't if, all of the rest of traffic isn't moving, they aren't moving either. You know they can't levitate above the traffic, so once they got more freedom to move around as we got into the late evening, they were able to get a lot done. PD did a great job, Police Department did a great job of getting out there and trying their best to unclog roads and get things moving. The tree removal was happening, some overnight, but just in terms of the kinds of crews we need, a lot more of that is going to start now. But I think to your point, your right about the early season storm, looking back on this, if we had a clear indication of the number of inches that were coming we would have had a better ability to predict that maybe that kind of you know domino effect would happen. We are going to be even more conservative going forward. But the real key here is, had we had better information we would have told people to stay home and clear the roads. So I'm going to again, learn the lesson immediately and say don't use your car if you don't need to today. Get out, get home from work early if you can let's try and keep the roads as clear as possible, keep the work of clearing the trees and getting rid of the remaining slush or one thing or another. Alternate side is suspended. You know, we're broadly out of this, generally roads are moving, although a little slowly around the city, there are still some issues on the Deegan and the Cross Bronx that are being worked on. But let's assume it's still going to be a little messy for the rest of the day and as few cars on the road as humanly possible.

Kiernan: Mayor de Blasio I appreciate you saying it was not the finest hour, because a lot of people felt that way yesterday. Now we've got on the screen a live picture from the Harlem River Drive near the Macombs Dam Bridge, some of the street flooding there. So as the Mayor says, it's not all easy today. Mayor de Blasio, final thought here, we got a long winter ahead.

Mayor: Look, I think the final thought is by and large I'm looking back over the last few years, the Sanitation Department does an outstanding job and we really owe a lot of respect to the men and women of Sanitation, they really know how to clear snow very, very efficiently. Information is the key, I'm going to be even more conservative about calling out the problem early and I am going to assume that people need to hear early that there might be a problem and some days people will say I cried wolf but I would rather be on that side of the problem than you know experiencing what we did here. But in the end you know, there's also going to be times when Mother Nature is just stronger than us and sometimes we are going to be playing catch up and this was certainly one of those times.

Kiernan: Mayor de Blasio thank you.

###