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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everyone. What a beautiful day in New York City today, what an amazing day, the day we have been waiting for, the day we dreamed of. A lot of people didn't know if this day would come. A lot of people doubted, but this day is here. The vaccine is here in New York City. The vaccine will be given out from this day forward. From this day forward, the vaccine will be distributed, and we will turn the tide on the coronavirus. This is a day to celebrate, and what a fitting beginning to the day that our health care heroes were in the spotlight, the folks who saw us through this whole crisis. What a good day that they're getting the respect they deserve for all they've done for us. So, the first person to get the shot here in New York City, the first person vaccinated, critical care nurse, Sandra Lindsay. And Sandra, boy, I was so impressed, Sandra didn't even flinch during that shot. But here she is, someone who has been protecting people in Queens, the epicenter of the crisis saving lives. How fitting that she was the first to get the vaccination. Well administered by Dr. Michelle Chester, Long Island Jewish Hospital in Queens, part of the Northwell system. And everyone, everyone in our health care system, we salute you. All our health care heroes, we thank you. We're going to protect you so you can protect all of us. So, what an amazing day and the vaccine is here, and it will be distributed starting today. You're going to start to see more and more people get it. Remember it starts to be effective even from the first vaccination and fully affected with the second.

So, we now begin, today, the largest vaccination effort in the history of New York City today is a historic day for many reasons. In New York City history, this will be remembered as the day where the largest mobilization ever was undertaken to protect the people of this city, the largest vaccination effort in our history. Now we're going to use every tool at our disposal. Our Vaccine Command Center will lead the way, every single City agency, every City employee will be a part of this to make sure that all New Yorkers are served. This is going to be a huge undertaking, but nowhere is there the ability and the strength and the know-how more than New York City to get something like this done. And particularly at our Health Department that has led the way over decades, generations, in doing vaccination on a large scale to protect the people of the city. Here to tell you more about it, our Health Commissioner, Dr. Dave Chokshi –

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. We've said before that the cavalry is on the way. Good news, of course. But we must acknowledge that it is a slow and steady march. To start, let me try to break down the coming days based on what we know and what we don't yet know. So, here's what we know about the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. First, leading scientists have confirmed that it is a very good vaccine in terms of safety and ability to protect against COVID-19 illness. I, myself, have poured over the studies, including what was released last week. Second, the first New York City bound vaccine shipments departed from Kalamazoo, Michigan yesterday in special cartons, held at minus 70 degrees. They will travel via UPS and FedEx, both by truck and by plane. Third, Pfizer

equipped the coolers with GPS enabled thermal sensors so the temperature can be monitored, and the vaccines tracked, to ensure they are received safely. If there are any problems with the shipments, Pfizer will notify us immediately. Fourth, our first vaccines are arriving today at five hospitals. That means that vaccines will become vaccinations today in New York City. Subsequent shipments are expected at 37 hospitals on Tuesday, and two more hospitals on Wednesday. Fifth, hospitals are ready and waiting for the vaccine. And after the initial vaccinations, the data will be reported to our citywide immunization registry within 24 hours of administration so we can securely keep track of who is getting the vaccine. Now, beyond the logistics, let me just take a moment to acknowledge what a remarkable and poignant milestone in our fight against COVID-19.

And now here are a few things that remain unknown. First, we don't yet know whether the Pfizer vaccine works for children under the age of 16. The FDA authorization was for ages 16 and up. Second, this week, the Moderna vaccine is expected to get a similar FDA review as the Pfizer vaccine did. We don't know the detailed results yet, but depending on them, the FDA's emergency authorization could come as soon as Friday. Third, we don't know our overall allotment of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines for New York City over the coming months. But we have been told to plan for approximately 465,000 doses over weeks one, two, and three. Throughout the process, we will be communicating with hospitals to answer questions and share updated guidance. We will also be monitoring incoming data, preparing subsequent orders, and working with community partners to spread facts and foresight.

While help is on the way, I'd like to add one thing. We remain in a state of emergency. If your house is on fire, you don't stay among the flames waiting for the fire department to arrive. You take the steps needed to stay safe. So, until every last ember is extinguished, we're asking you to stay safe by masking up, staying home if you feel ill, keeping your distance, washing your hands, and getting tested. We are still in this together. And the core four precautions are what will keep you, your friends, and your family healthy. When it's my turn, I look forward to rolling up my sleeves to receive the vaccine. Until then I'm taking heart in the fact that my hospital colleagues are getting one more layer of protection and I'll keep taking the steps that I can to protect them as well as others, particularly those who are at greatest risk. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Dr. Chokshi. And yes, our hospitals have been preparing for this day. The folks who protect all of us have been getting ready. Nowhere has that been more true than in our public hospitals and clinics, Health + Hospitals, we depend on so much in this city. And Health + Hospitals hospitals were bearing the brunt of this crisis during that time when we were the epicenter. They were going through some of the toughest realities. So, they know, they are battle veterans. They know how important it is to distribute this vaccine and get it right. Here to tell you about all the efforts being made in our public hospital system, CEO of Health + Hospitals, Dr. Mitch Katz.

President and CEO Mitchell Katz, NYC Health + Hospitals: Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. Thank you for your continued support of the public hospital system. Without you, I think several years ago, when Health + Hospitals was so close to financial ruin, there would be no Health + Hospitals system. But you saved it, and I think it's proven what a great investment that is, and it's really risen to the occasion. I want people to understand how difficult it is to be a doctor or a nurse in the midst of a pandemic. You're wearing all of your gear but you're still worried, is this infection going to come home with me, am I going to get sick, am I going to bring this

infection home to my children, to my spouse? And then, all of a sudden, you're intubating a fellow nurse – your charge nurse, the nurse who kept you safe. You're intubating a fellow doctor. You work beside her for all the weeks of the pandemic, what a horrible, horrible thing. And I'm so pleased that everyone recognizes that the health care workers should be at the top of the list. They've done their job. They're continuing to do their job. They need to be protected. They need to be kept healthy so that they do not go out sick, but can be there for all of us if we should need their help at hospitalization. And we're very proud of Health + Hospitals being able to receive the vaccine, we've been preparing for it. We will be focusing in the first weeks on those people who are at the highest risk of being exposed to COVID in the hospital. Those are people who are working with patients who have a breathing tube. That breathing tube causes more virus to be in the air. Because of that, we want the nurses, the ICU nurses, the respiratory therapists, the anesthesiologist, the emergency room doctors, we want them to be vaccinated first. We look forward to with the Mayor and Dr. Chokshi to being part of the broader effort after we've done the health care workers to do the broad population of New York City.

There is no more trusted provider to the low-income communities of New York City than Health + Hospitals. We take care of over a million people a year – 400,000, choose us as their primary source of care. We are known in the immigrant communities as a safe place to be cared for, a place where you will not get crippling bills, a place where no one will report you, a place where if you're homeless and poor you'll be treated with dignity and respect. And we look forward to being part of that effort. And, Mr. Mayor, we agree – Dr. Chokshi and you – that until then, we'll all do our best to stay safe.

Mayor: Amen. Amen. Thank you so much, Dr. Katz, to you and your whole team for everything you're doing to protect us. Hey, everyone, look, we, in this city, we're going to show the world once again what New York City can do. We're going to be distributing this vaccine quickly and effectively. We're also going to be doing it equitably. We're going to be doing it fairly for the folks who need it the most, for the neighborhoods that need it. The most our command center is going to lead the way to make sure things keep moving and that things are done the right way. But, in the meantime, just as we get this amazing, good news, we are dealing with this second wave here in New York City. We are not done yet with the coronavirus. So, let's celebrate today. Let's be hopeful. It is a shot of hope. Let's be clear, it's not just a shot in the medical sense, it's a shot of hope. But we have to keep fighting this virus in the meantime. So, we remain vigilant. We're going to have a tough December, a tough January. You heard the doctor say continue to take those precautions so that we can move forward.

Now, one of the precautions the State of New York made a decision, and I agree with that decision, was to tighten up some of our restrictions. And, as of this morning, indoor dining is no longer in effect in New York City for the foreseeable future. Again, the more we fight back against the disease, the more the vaccine is distributed, that situation will change, and sooner rather than later, I believe. But those restrictions are in effect now. Indoor dining is not happening, but outdoor dining continues, takeout and delivery continue. Look, the folks who work in our restaurant industry, they've been through hell, let's be clear. I feel for every one of them, I feel for the folks who created a restaurant with their bare hands, had an idea, made it happen, employed people. I feel for hundreds or thousands or more New Yorkers working in the industry right now, and so many more that used to. We've got to bring this industry back. We've got to bring back the restaurants we love, but it's going to take time. In the meantime, we've got to stay safe, because this second wave is very, very real. So, we need to protect each other. We

need people to be alive so they can next year feel what it's like to go back to eating indoors and celebrating our holidays with our families. We've got to protect people now. And if we're really going to have that recovery we deserve, we need that stimulus. Still, no clear direction coming from Washington, but we're going to keep fighting for a stimulus that actually allows the small businesses in New York City to recover, and the renters in New York City to recover, and the people of New York city to recover, and our economy to come back. That's what we'll keep fighting for. That's what we need. We need it now and we're going to need it when Joe Biden steps into the White House as our president.

Okay. Quick update – obviously, as we continue so much important work, one of the really bright spots has been our public schools. Our kids are safe. Our educators and staff are safe. Learning is going on right now in New York City – 878 schools opened in the course of last week. We are going to make sure that those schools remain safe, but we're also going to systematically move those schools to five-day-a-week education for as many kids as possible in as many schools as possible. Each school will be different, but we're going to keep you updated each week on how that progress is going. So, we're one week into it. And this week we'll have about 250 schools where kids will be going five days a week, either all kids or most kids, or, at minimum, the priority kids we've talked about – kids who live in shelter, kids who live in public housing, kids with special needs. So, five-day-a-week education, growing week by week in New York City. You're going to be seeing a lot more as we move forward. We'll keep you updated. But, really, credit to our educators, credit to the staff, everyone working so hard to make sure our kids get as many days in school as possible.

All right, let's go over today's indicators. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19 – today's report is 185 patients. It's under our threshold of 200, that's the good news, but it's still way too high and it's been a tough stretch lately, obviously. A new indicator that we have, the hospitalization rate per 100,000 people – 2.73 today. We want to get that under two. Second, we're going over every day now both the probable and confirmed cases of the coronavirus on a seven-day average. Today's number, a very high number, 2,137. Again, we want to stay under 550. It's going to take us a long time to get back there, but we will. Number three, this is the percentage of New York City residents testing positive, seven-day rolling average – today's report, 5.5 percent. We want to get back under five and then keep going – lower, lower all the time – and the vaccine is going to be leading the way.

A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, we turn to our colleagues in the media and please let me know the name of the outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: Good morning, all. We'll now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Dr. Chokshi, by Dr. Katz, by Commissioner Deanne Criswell, and by Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. The first question today will go to Emma Fitzsimmons from the New York Times.

Question: Hi, good morning, Mayor.

Mayor: How are you going, Emma?

Question: Can you tell us – hi, I'm good. So, can you tell us which other hospitals are going to be receiving the doses today and, you know, what your plans are for the rest of the day?

Mayor: Sure, Emma. I'll start with my plans and pass to Dr. Chokshi to talk about distribution. And, as Dr Chokshi said, we'll always tell you what is confirmed, what we can say is absolutely fact. And, you know, when we are not certain yet of a specific detail, we're going to tell you that too, because this is going to be an ever-evolving situation in the coming days. So, I will say, in my case, I'll be at a hospital here in the city this afternoon to have another great moment where a New Yorker gets vaccinated, but those details are still coming together. We'll let you know as soon as that happens. Dr. Chokshi, let's make sure we give people that which we know, but also acknowledge that which we're still waiting to learn.

Commissioner Chokshi: Absolutely, Mr. Mayor. What I can just add briefly to that is that we do know that vaccine shipment is on the way to five hospitals today with the remaining of the 54 that we expect to get vaccine to get their shipments either on Tuesday or a Wednesday. As we get more confirmation about precise deliveries, that's additional that we can share over time.

Mayor: Go ahead, Emma.

Question: Thanks. And can you tell us a little bit about how you heard about its arrival? We heard that State officials were tracking the arrival of the vaccine through a UPS phone app. So, can you talk about how you learned the news and then maybe the emotion or how you felt when you were watching the vaccination take place today, if you watched it?

Mayor: I did. Absolutely beautiful moment – a beautiful moment. Look, there was such – to me, it was not just a moment where hope was realized. I felt that deeply, like just the – when I saw, you know, normally we don't love needles, right? But this is a needle I'm very happy about. So, when I saw the needle go into the nurse's arm, I just felt this welling up of hope – an amazing sense of like, we actually are turning the corner, it's actually here. And it was extraordinary. It was amazing that she didn't flinch. That's a true professional. But, you know, to me, we were watching an incredibly historic moment and the beginning of something much better for this city and this country. Also, the sense of fairness, the sense of justice – that it was a health care worker who got the first shot, that the folks who went through such hell to protect all of us and often haven't really been given the full credit they deserve – you know, them getting the opportunity to be honored with the first shot made a lot of sense for me. I have often been in churches lately and I quote the scriptural point that's so deep, so powerful – the first shall be last and the last shall be first – to see folks who often don't get their due, honored with the first shot, that was really powerful.

So, with that, in terms of how we have been working with the State on information and the tracking, I'll turn to Dr. Chokshi.

Commissioner Chokshi: Sure. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And I'll just add briefly, it certainly makes your heart swell just to think about what it means for people who have who have given of themselves to protect others now getting some protection for themselves as well. And with

respect to the logistics of tracking, the way that it works is that we, as well as the State, are notified when shipments occur – that's from the Pfizer manufacturing plant in Kalamazoo. Once that happens, it's the hospitals that then take the ultimate, you know, information flow around precisely how a shipment makes it to the loading dock of their hospital. That information, of course, is something that has to remain secure. But we're in constant communication with hospitals to both them what they should expect and make sure that they have the plans in place to receive the vaccine appropriately. But they're also telling us as they receive it as well.

Mayor: I just want to take one quick moment to recognize, you know, a lot of times people talk about the differences in our country. I think it's a moment to show appreciation for our fellow Americans who did the work to create this vaccine. And I want to shout out the folks who work in that factory in Kalamazoo, Michigan, that have gotten this ready for all the rest of us. The spotlight of the world is on Kalamazoo, Michigan, and they deserve our praise and appreciation. So, shout out to everyone in Kalamazoo. Thank you for what you're doing for all of us.

Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Marcia from WCBS.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. How are you doing today? A very historic day for New York City –

Mayor: It's such a great day, Marcia. I'm floating on air today, let me tell you.

Question: So, I wanted to – my first question is, I wanted to ask you about the indoor restaurants. How long do you think that the restaurants will have to remain closed for indoor dining, knowing that the holiday spread is such a huge issue?

Mayor: Marcia, look, I think we all have it within our power to fight back this virus and overcome it in the weeks ahead, but they're going to be tough weeks. December and January will be very tough. We're looking at this constant growth of the disease and this second wave, it's really, really worrisome. So, this action that the State took was necessary. The Governor said in a New York Times interview over the weekend that we should prepare for the possibility of a full shutdown. I agree with that. We need to recognize that that may be coming and we've got to get ready for that now, because we cannot let this virus keep growing, especially at a moment where we are finally getting the vaccine and can turn the corner. So, I would say to you, I think December is very tough, January is tough. I think after that, we get a chance to really come back strong. Go ahead, Marcia.

Question: So, my second question has to do with the outdoor dining. If you go and look at some of the outdoor dining facilities that people have put up, many of them have just a single door to get in or an air slit. And the State has said that you have to have at least two open sides to qualify for outdoor dining. So, my question to you is what is the City going to do in terms of inspecting these facilities and saying that they pass muster? Are you going to go out and tell people, hey, listen, this doesn't work, you have to open a window, you have to open a side? Are you going to give them citations? What's going to happen?

Mayor: It's been an ongoing effort to get every one of the outdoor dining establishments to make sure they're in full compliance with law, they're healthy, they're safe. Restaurant owners have worked really hard with City agencies, Department of Health and others, to get it right. But remember, some are doing outdoor dining, others are following the rules of indoor dining and they have very few people in them. It depends on how they've set up. The important thing is to make sure that they follow all the State guidance and our folks will be there to make it happen. And we've gotten a lot of compliance. I want to be clear, there's still things that have to be made better, no question, but the restaurant owners and the restaurant staff have really been trying to work with us, because they know how important it is to keep people safe.

Moderator: The next is Andrew Siff from WNBC.

Question: Yes Mayor, good morning. And good morning to everyone on the call. We were fortunate enough to witness this shot here at LIJ on the eastern edge of Queens here today. I'm wondering how quickly do you think the other vaccinations can take place at this facility, at other New York City hospitals today? We have been hearing – last week, I think Mark Levine told us he thought it might be 200 people per facility per day? Do you have any better clarification on how quickly this can ramp up?

Mayor: Dr. Chokshi, then Dr. Katz.

Commissioner Chokshi: Thank you, Andrew, for that question. Yes. It's a really important question because of course we want to make sure that the vaccine gets to as many people as quickly as possible. There are some considerations though. To do this safely, to do it in a way that makes sure that the health care systems themselves take into account some of the side effects that may affect staff as well. So, what we've been doing in discussion with our colleagues at hospitals is to make sure that they have a plan in place with respect to scheduling staggered appointments so that it's not people all from the same unit getting vaccinated on the same day. You know, little things make a big difference with the logistics here. For example, giving someone an appointment to get the vaccine the day before they're scheduled to have a day off. That's something that can make a big difference with respect to making sure that they do okay, you know, after they get that vaccination. So, with that said, the plan is for you know, the doses that are getting delivered over the next three days to be methodically and gradually used over the next week to a week and a half overall.

Mayor: Thank you. Dr. Katz.

President Katz: I very much agree with what Dr. Chokshi has said. We should be – we'll be able to fully use our supply. In this first day, certainly everybody should focus on making sure that their process is done well, that it's done safely. This is a vaccine that the world has never seen before. There's never been an mRNA vaccine. It has to be taken care of in very special conditions. It can only be out of the freezer for a certain amount of time, but once the process is mechanized, I think it will start to go very fast. And I know Health + Hospitals, we've hired a whole group of nurses specifically to focus on giving vaccinations so that there is no delay. As soon as supply comes, we'll be able to immunize people. Thank you.

Mayor: Go ahead, Andrew.

Question: Shifting gears to weather, the Department of Sanitation sent guidance that restaurants need to remove their outdoor space if there is 12 inches of snow in the forecast. And from what we're seeing right now, the forecast is right on the bubble in some areas for that. So, what is your recommendation to restaurants at this point with regard to the storm this week?

Mayor: Look, we'll get out specific guidance through Emergency Management. I mean, right now it is on the bubble and I would not urge anyone to act yet until we get more clarity. We understand each restaurant's in a different situation. And it's really important to understand Andrew, the best of all worlds is when they have the ability to easily remove what they have built for outdoor dining. For some that's a lot harder than for others. But we also want to be clear that when we expect major snow it's in their interest in everyone's interest to clear away as much of their equipment as possible to facilitate the snow cleaning and protect their equipment. So, this one to me, we're still on the cusp right now. Emergency Management will get more information out next 24 hours and get a clearer picture. Let me see if our Commissioner of Emergency Management Deanne Criswell wants to add anything?

Commissioner Deanne Criswell, Office of Emergency Management: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. You're spot on. Right now, we're still watching it. It looks like it's six to 12 inches. So, it's right on the cusp. And we are meeting with the National Weather Service three times a day to get updates and we'll get more definitive information out tomorrow to everybody on the exact steps that they need to take.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Emily from NY1.

Question: Good morning, everyone.

Mayor: How are you doing Emily?

Question: I'm well, thank you very much.

Mayor: Happy Vaccine Day!

Question: Happy V Day.

Mayor: V Day, right.

Question: May I please ask you about the hard-hit communities that you discussed Friday, the ones you want to prioritize for vaccine distribution? I'm hearing what everyone's saying about getting limited quantities in the first couple of shipments, but what do we tell those communities about when they can expect to get the vaccine? How will they be able to access it?

Mayor: Yeah. I want to turn to Dr. Chokshi and Dr. Varma. But look, I think the key point, Emily, as we've said, very clearly, everyone said federal, state, local health care workers, frontline, most vulnerable, and nursing home staff, nursing home residents, that's where we're all focused first. We're going to be focusing on other health care workers, first responders. We're going to then be focusing on the most vulnerable people, folks over 65, folks with preexisting

conditions or especially folks that have both. But when we do that we're going to really put emphasis on the 27 neighborhoods that were most hard hit by COVID, that's neighborhoods of color in this city, Black, Latino, Asian. And we're going to make sure that they get their fair share. That's the basic concept. But to give you a little more flavor of how that will play out, first Dr. Chokshi and then Dr. Varma.

Commissioner Chokshi: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And that's exactly right with respect to how we see this unfolding over the coming weeks and months. The priority is, as the Mayor just said is that the coming weeks we'll be focused on people who are at greatest risk and particularly at greatest risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 illness. We hope and plan that there will be enough vaccine supply in the early months of 2021 for us to start expanding the circle out beyond that. And that's where these considerations that we have made central to our plan around equity will really be brought to bear. So, a little bit more about the how, to your question. Well, what we know is that the most important thing with respect to making sure that people who are in those hard-hit neighborhoods actually get the vaccine, is to rely on the places that they already trust. Whether it's a relationship that they have with their primary care doctor or the local clinic or their local pharmacy. And so, we're going to rely on that for distribution. But also rely on trusted messengers in those communities to communicate about the vaccine.

Mayor: Dr. Varma.

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Yeah. I just wanted to touch on one aspect that Dr. Chokshi mentioned in his opening statement, which is there are things that we're waiting for also. And so, I think that today is an incredibly hopeful and exciting day because we have the first of our vaccines. But there are more vaccines coming. We know the Moderna vaccine, which is very similar to the Pfizer one is likely to get authorized very soon. There are evaluations of another US grown product, the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. So, I think what's going to be important for communities throughout the city is to continue to listen to the updated guidance that they're getting. And as Dr Chokshi has mentioned, talk to your trusted health care providers because there's going to be a lot of information. It's going to be challenging to sift through at the time. We're going to do our best to constantly communicate and make it clear. But learning and trying to understand what's happening is going to be helpful so that when your turn in line comes, you're going to be ready to know about making the right decision for your own health.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Emily.

Question: Thank you all. The second one, my second question is regarding safety measures at Rikers considering the surge. Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez issued a letter to the DOC raising her concerns and asking what you're doing for the individuals there considering they're not sentenced to death by virus there?

Mayor: Look Emily, it's an important question. And one where New York City has a very clear track record. And I worked very closely with our Correction team, our Health + Hospitals team that provides the health care at Rikers and other jails. And I want to thank Dr. Katz and all of his colleagues at Health + Hospitals who work in our Correction system. They don't get a lot of credit, but they deserve it because they do really good and important work. So, I thank them. As we were dealing with the first wave the great unknown, everyone was trying to make sense of this situation, this city made a bold decision. Working with DAs, working with the State, we

ultimately had about 1,600 inmates come out of our jail system as a protective measure, given what was happening then. We are in a different situation now, thank God. Correctional health is in a much better position to address the virus because everyone's learned so much more. We have a lot of space that we are using because the population, particularly at Rikers went so low that we have a lot of available space. We're able to spread people out. We're screening anyone who comes in, whether employee or inmate to make sure that we know their situation. It's a much, much better situation now. That said, we're watching it very carefully. The last report I got Emily was the infection rate in our Correction system was lower than the infection rate for the whole city. But that said, we're watching carefully, we're preparing steps to make sure we can protect people and make moves as we get more information.

Moderator: The next is Rich Lamb from WCBS 880.

Question: Good morning. Congratulations, I guess Mr. Mayor and the team there.

Mayor: Congratulations to everyone Rich. It's an amazing day for all of us.

Question: And just an aside here. Did you know that Pfizer started in Brooklyn in 1849?

Mayor: I did not know that. I know they're a great New York City company, but I didn't know that they go back that far. That's pretty amazing. So, it's a proud day for New York City leading the country again.

Question: Yeah. So, this is yeah so true. So, this is an intramuscular shot from what I understand, not intravenous. And we've heard about this ultra-cold storage. So how cold is the vaccine when it's injected? And can you feel that? I mean, it's almost like one would think it's almost solid and the way it's, when it's at that low temperature or it must be frozen solid, yes?

Mayor: I have to say before I turn to Dr. Chokshi. I was so impressed again by Sandra Lindsay who just didn't even blink when she got the shot in her shoulder there. Obviously, you did not see it in her reaction. It looked pretty smooth. But Dr. Chokshi talk to us about the temperature and what it feels like, et cetera?

Commissioner Chokshi: Sure. First Rich, thanks for that fun Pfizer fact. I wasn't aware of it either.

Mayor: Fun Pfizer fact. That was very alliterative. Go ahead.

Commissioner Chokshi: So, to return the favor with respect to the information about the temperature of the vaccine. You're right, when it's stored it's at ultra-cold temperatures. But it does get thawed before it's administered, you know, before it's injected as an intramuscular shot. So, generally, that will be at room temperature. It takes about 30 minutes for the vaccine to thaw from ultra-cold temperatures to room temperature if you just leave it out at room temperature. It takes about three hours for it to thaw from ultra-cold to placing it in a refrigerator. If it is placed in a refrigerator then when it's mixed for the shot it will further a thaw. So, you shouldn't experience any sensation of coldness upon getting the vaccine.

Mayor: Go ahead, Rich.

Question: Okay. And I'm just wondering if Dr. Katz can go over exactly who is getting the first shots and what the thinking is in regard to that? I heard something along those lines, but I wondered if we can know what the thinking – why people are in the most danger, who are the people? And what's the, you know, how does it work?

President Katz: Certainly. So, the people in a hospital who were at the most danger are people who are doing procedures that aerosolized the virus, meaning send the virus particles into the air. That usually means there's some pressure. And the common instance of that is patients who were on a breathing tube, where a tube is placed down their throat in order to use a ventilator to push in air. And that causes air to be pushed out and the virus into the air. So, the people who most deal with those tubes are respiratory therapists, ICU nurses, which is I'm sure why Mr. Mayor, you saw the ICU nurse getting the vaccine today, emergency room physicians who intubate patients, those would be the people at highest risk and the ones we're doing first.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Jake Offenhartz at Gothamist.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey Jake, how you been?

Question: I'm pretty good. You mentioned that the possibility of a full shutdown in the coming weeks and I was hoping you could kind of elaborate on what that would look like. Are we talking, you know, the same size shut down as we saw in March, something different your envisioning? I also know the chair of the City Council of Health Committee has mentioned, you know, calling for the closure of non-essential office spaces. So, are you at a point right now where you would recommend New Yorkers who don't need to go into an office, don't?

Mayor: Yeah, look, Jake, first of all, this is a constant conversation that I'm having with the Governor, my team's having with the State all the time, and what is increasingly clear is that all forms of restrictions have to be on the table at this point. The Governor's quote in the Times I think said it exactly right, and the current rate we're going, you have to be ready now for a full shutdown, a pause like we had back at the end of the spring. And that is, I think, increasingly necessary just to break the back of the second wave, to stop this second wave from growing, to stop it from taking lives, to stop it from threatening our hospitals. So, we're working carefully with the State. The State will ultimately make the decision. I certainly do agree that folks who don't need to be going into a workplace at this point should do as much as they can remotely. Again, I think there's a likelihood of more restrictions quite soon. So, folks should start making those adjustments now and get ready to work remotely if they can. Hopefully we're talking about restrictions only for a matter of weeks, but we have to be preparing ourselves mentally and, you know, practically for that possibility. Go ahead.

Question: Okay, and on education you had mentioned there are 250 public schools where some of the neediest students ready to go five-days-a-week, and how many of these schools can all students go five-days-a-week?

Mayor: We'll get you the updated numbers as they keep emerging. Jake, I think what's really important for everyone to understand is this is going to literally improve each week. So, this week going into next week, we have only a few days of school, and then everyone comes back on January 4th. You're going to see improvement throughout this week, on January 4th you're going to see a lot and improvement. My goal, the Chancellor's goal, maximum number of schools out of that 878 schools that are up and running, maximum number go to full five-day-a-week for all their kids, the next best category is five-day-a-week for most kids, and the next best category is five-day-a-week at least for the kids with greatest need. We're going to be able to do that I think very successfully across those 878 schools. In terms of exactly how many we'll get into each category, we'll know a lot more in the coming days, but I think the thing to envision is when we come back on January 4th you're going to see a big jump up of the number of schools that are doing five-day-a-week education, and we'll keep going from there. We'll keep improving upon it every week thereafter.

Moderator: We have time for two more for today. The next is Amanda Eisenberg from Politico.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, how are you?

Mayor: Happy vaccine day, Amanda, how are you?

Question: Happy vaccine day. I cried watching a video, so I'm very happy.

Mayor: I appreciate it. I think this is going to be a new question, do you cry when you watch vaccine videos? So, I think that shows you have a lot of heart.

Question: Yeah. So, I wanted to ask you, my first question is when do you expect to get the vaccine within this priority schema considering Trump and his staffers are among the first to get to that?

Mayor: The man who's going to make that decision is sitting right here. I really think it's important for public officials to follow the guidance of their health leadership. I will go by my priority status whenever that is, unless for any reason that health leadership determines otherwise. So, let me pass the question to the person will make the decision, Doctor Chokshi.

Commissioner Chokshi: Thank you, Mr. Mayor and I just want to say the Mayor has been very upfront and clear about about his wanting advice from me as a Health Commissioner from the rest of the health team about this very question and really it brings to bear issues of of fairness. And so, the Mayor will get the vaccine, you know, sort of as the prioritization is laid out over the coming weeks. Right now, as you know, the first priority is high risk hospital workers, as well as people who are in long-term care facilities, both residents and staff. So, it will be after that phase at some point that the Mayor will get his vaccine. I think the really important thing is when he does get it, the symbol that that shows with respect to confidence in the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine.

Mayor: Amen. Okay, go ahead, Amanda.

Question: Great, thank you. And then my second question is in regards to the Satmar funeral, the New York Post wrote a couple of stories over the weekend. And so, I was wondering to find out what you're hoping to glean from your investigation that wasn't already available via photos and social media?

Mayor: Yeah, it's a good question, Amanda, look, a lot of times the photos and social media give us a very partial view when we're talking about the potential of shutting down a building and not allowing anyone in, we want to make sure we get exactly right. I'll get an update on the investigation and we'll certainly make public what we found, but I think that, you know, we're, we're going to continue to talk to community leaders to make sure that they understand that these rules must be followed, and, if not, no one wants to shut down the building, but if we see that there hasn't been compliance, we will shut down the building. Go ahead.

Moderator: Last question for today, it goes to Gersh from Streetsblog.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor, how are you? Congratulations.

Mayor: Congratulations to all, Gersh, and I want to see if there's a transportation related vaccine question here. I'm ready.

Question: Well, there isn't really, but I will follow up on Marcia's question, which was legitimate. So, as you know, we see these structures in the street now for the open restaurants, many of them have opaque sidewalls, meaning even though they remain setback from the intersections, car drivers can't see pedestrians and vice versa. So, I've asked DOT many times to document how many inspections it has done and how many restaurants have been cited for blocking view sheds that you guys put into the rules, and the only answer I've gotten is many. So, I'm wondering if you can instruct the DOT to provide the actual number of restaurants that have been cited for creating dangerous street conditions with walls that cannot be seen through and I'd love to get your comments on that?

Mayor: No, look, I'm really glad you're raising it and, you know, Gersh, something I like to say when a journalist raises a point that helps us focus on things we need to do better or things we, you know, need to check up on, I find it very helpful. So, I want to thank you for that because I am a Vision Zero believer, and I'm also an outdoor dining believer, and open dining, open streets, it has been amazing step forward for the city, but it has to be safe. So, I will get you an answer because we do need to make sure that we've done that piece, right. We got to keep everyone safe while we're also trying to protect people's livelihoods and give people a real sense of this city able to recover soon. But I'll get you an answer on that. Go ahead.

Question: Okay. And my second question, I will ask a COVID vaccine related transportation question. I'm able to do that, moving on the fly. You said the other day that you would obviously take the vaccine to demonstrate that it is safe. You're obviously excited about the vaccine. Given that study after study show that transit is also safe and the transit is really suffering because a lot of people think it's unsafe, maybe you would start riding transit, maybe for a week just to show that it's safe. And I know in the past you have said that such a Mayoral demonstration is "cheap symbolism", but maybe in this case, it isn't, tell me what do you think?

Mayor: Respectfully, old friend, you're, you're taking that quote out of context. That was a quote about a different matter which I did feel at the time, but this is a different matter. I agree with you it is important to let people know the subways are safe. I like the idea of having a period of time to really emphasize to people that they're safe by being out there. So, I accept that good idea, and we'll figure out when the right time to do that is, and we'll do it, and we will surely invite you along.

Everybody, as we conclude today, what an amazing day, let's just, you know, after everything we've been through, this whole year, and it has been a long, long year, we will not look back on 2020 fondly. However, let's give 2020 it's due in the midst of this horrible pandemic, an amazing human effort all over the world to come up with this vaccine and it was done in record time. And now everyone is putting their shoulder to the wheel to make sure that this vaccine gets to all the people in the city who need it as quickly as possible. Look, there's some justice in the fact that we were the epicenter where the first wave dealt with the brunt of this crisis and now we're going to be in the first wave of fighting back, getting this vaccine out as quickly or more quickly than any place else in the country. Protecting our people. New York City is going to show the whole world how quickly and well we can get this vaccine to the people that need it. But remember, vaccine is part of the answer. It's going to ultimately be the biggest part of the answer, but right now it still depends on you. We got one last big battle in December and January, we got to fight back this virus so we can give the vaccine time to do its work. So, everyone, please remember the masks, distancing, if you're traveling, don't travel, cancel your travel, stay close, small gatherings, help each other, and when the opportunity comes to get that vaccine, go get it. When it's your priority time, go get it. I'm going to do it, our health leadership's going to do it. We do all these things, right. We're going to get through this last fight and finally turn the page on the coronavirus. Thank you, everyone.

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