



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

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**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT PROBATIONARY  
FIREFIGHTERS SWEARING-IN CEREMONY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Thank you, chief. Thank you for always leading us through these ceremonies. I want to thank Commissioner Nigro. I think all of you know this history, but it's something you should truly appreciate. Commissioner Nigro is a remarkable leader who comes from a remarkable tradition – he himself, class of 1969; his dad before him, class of 1946. And he provided leadership on the most difficult day, the most painful day this department ever saw, and he is the kind of leader that we are so honored to have leading you forward into what will be great careers serving the people of this city. I want to thank Commissioner Nigro for all he does for this city.

[Applause]

You have a great leadership team, and you will see over the years how important that is. I want to thank them all. I particularly want to thank First Deputy Commissioner Robert Turner, and Chief of Department James Leonard. These are proven leaders. You will see time and again what it means to have leaders of this caliber. I want to thank them, and everyone on the dais – give them another round of applause.

It's an honor to be with you, because you have answered the highest calling of public service. It's an honor to be with people who have made that choice. It's not an easy choice. But it's a profoundly important choice for the people of this city. In times like these, the city needs heroes more than ever. We need people who show us how good humanity can be.

Here at this swearing in, we have 323 heroic people – because you made a heroic choice. You made the choice to serve. You made the choice to serve others – people you don't even know, but whose humanity you are here to protect. And that is an extraordinarily noble choice. It's heroic to do something that involves such challenge and such danger, to have the strength to take on that challenge.

A lot of people – a lot of people you know in your lives – will make perfectly choices for their lives, but they'll make simpler choices. They'll make choices that don't have the kind of danger, the kind of challenges that you'll confront. There's something special about you that you made this choice. Most people – let's face it – most people don't have the fortitude to run into burning buildings, to scale perilous heights, to risk their lives on a moment's notice for others. That's a special kind of human being. And just by getting to this point, by being here to take the oath of office today, you've shown how exceptional you are.

Now, you probably know what's ahead. They call this place The Rock for a reason. Life here, over the next 18 weeks, will not be easy. And I think you will look back and be very happy that it wasn't easy. It will prepare you for what's ahead. There'll be a lot of pushups, there'll be a lot of staircases to climb, there'll be a lot of late nights of studying. You'll be in all sorts of simulations – high-rise fires, subways, everything that could be thrown at you up ahead, you'll start to experience here. And that's a blessing, because it will make you ready.

At the end of this 18 weeks, you will receive an extraordinary reward. You will be able to say, with deepest pride, that you are part of the greatest firefighting force in the world. And that's something that can be said without any fear of contradiction, because the world has watched the FDNY, time and time again. There's no doubt that you're the best, for what you've achieved over generations. And that's not just in the most painful and dramatic moments. It's in the everyday work that this department does.

This year, this department is on track to respond to a record number of emergency calls – the most in its history, projected to be over 1.6 million calls by year's end – a staggering number that shows how much impact you have on the day-to-day life of the people of New York City and what a positive difference you make for them.

And you're joining a department that is doing its job better and better all the time. This year, there were only 69 fire-related deaths in New York City – let's remember, a city of 8.4 million people. There were only 69 fire-related deaths, and this caps off a five-year period that is the lowest in the history of this department – the lowest number of deaths over five years ever. So that says something about the department you're joining. It is not only the finest in the world – it is working every day to become even better.

I can't think of anything that could give people more pride in the work they do, the uniform they wear, than knowing that you're with the best and the best are working every day to get better. Why? What is the secret? What makes the FDNY so good? It's tremendous talent – the people it has attracted over the years is part of it, the work ethic, which is unsurpassed, the training, the history, the sense of innovation, and the kind of people who are brought to it – their personal make-up, the fact that they represent the best of New York City.

This year's class – I can tell you – you're an impressive group. You're an impressive group of people who've gotten this far and you reflect everything good about this city. You reflect the rich diversity of this city – nearly half of this class – excuse me, nearly half of this class is black, Hispanic, or Asian. Three women in your ranks means we will have a record number of women on the force. This is a fire department that is getting stronger and better all the time.

And when you think about the kind of people it attracts, it's crucial to note that many of you are not first-time public servants. Many of you have given before and sacrificed before. In fact, over 50 of you are veterans of our armed services – and that is something we thank you for – coming back to serve again – and we thank you for your service to our nation. Let's give them a round of applause.

[Applause]

Two of you today have particularly powerful legacies – Michael Sullivan, the son of Firefighter John Sullivan; Christopher Galfano, the son of Barry Galfano of the NYPD Emergency Services Unit. Both their fathers served heroically during 9/11, and both, tragically, were lost due to 9/11-related illnesses. That spirit of continuing to serve no matter what lives on in these two young men, and it's also a reminder that that tragic day cannot be forgotten. But look at the resolute understanding in this department and throughout this city that we had to come back and come back stronger – and in fact, we did. Even out of that tragedy, we came back stronger. Today, Michael and Christopher are helping us in that process of getting better and stronger all the time. Let's thank them for continuing that legacy.

[Applause]

One last thing I want to say to you – and I'm not sure this is always as clear as it could be or should be – I can tell from many, many years of talking to people all over this city how much they feel about this department – how proud of you they are, how much they depend on you. When you know there's a firehouse nearby, it's one of the most reassuring feelings anybody can have in this city. People are grateful. They know their lives could depend on you and they know you are more than worthy to the task. They take a lot of pride – the people of this

city – they take a lot of pride in the FDNY because they know it’s the best. Maybe people don’t stop you on the street to tell you that they know how tough your job is, but a lot of people do know how tough this job is. A lot of people look at you with a respect that they know they couldn’t do what you do, but they say thank God you do it.

So as you prepare to take this oath, let me be the first to say to you – on behalf of literally all 8.4 million New Yorkers, thank you. Thank you for making this decision. Thank you for serving the people of this city.

[Applause]

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