



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

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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO  
ENCOURAGE NEW YORKERS TO BE PREPARED AS THE CITY HEADS INTO  
PEAK HURRICANE SEASON**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good afternoon everyone. It is such a pleasure to be in Red Hook. This is a neighborhood that I've been blessed to have a very strong connection with, going back to 1999 when I ran for community school board. I was a member of Community School Board 15, which included Red Hook, and had the honor of working with a lot of community residents and leaders. And this is an extraordinary – doing my best – I don't have that kind of microphone. I will project my voice. But this is an extraordinary community. And it is a community that I really honor because in the midst of the challenges – there have been many challenges in Red Hook over the years. But people have kept fighting back. They've taken real ownership in this community. Red Hook Initiatives is a great example of that. And during Sandy people did amazing work helping each other. And it's a community I think gets stronger all the time. So it's a real pleasure to be here.

We're here because it's August 1. And officially, August 1 is the start of the hurricane season. Now hurricane season is by definition a time when we wait to see what mother nature brings to us. Some years its very little, some years its quite a lot. But August 1 is when we put our full attention on the situation because we know anything could happen, and we're ready. And it's important for everyone to be prepared. That's the key point of today's gathering, is the work we're doing to prepare everyday New Yorkers for anything that may come to us. We are the most resilient city, the most resilient of peoples. But it is also important to constantly prepare to do better, to train and get ready for anything thrown at us.

Again when I saw the effects of Sandy here in this neighborhood, it was deeply troubling to see how hard hit this neighborhood was. And for weeks and weeks it went on. The NYCHA developments here went weeks without electricity. People struggled. People didn't have the basics in many cases. But the neighborhood banded together. And even without all the preparation that people deserve, people improvised in an extraordinary manner. We want to make it easier. We want to be ready for the next time. And god forbid we see anything like Sandy again, but we have to be ready in any event. We want to make it better for people. We want to get them more ready for anything thrown at them.

I want to thank Jill Eisenhard, the executive director of the Red Hook Initiative, one of the founders. And everyone who's associated with Red Hook Initiative. You have a lot to be proud of. This is an amazing organization that has done endless good, not only in response to Sandy but in everyday life in this community, helping people get the healthcare and other services they need. And Red Hook Initiatives has been playing a leading role working with the Office of Emergency Management, working with the housing authority to prepare people better. I want to thank all of the volunteers who have gotten the training so they can help their fellow New Yorkers and their fellow Red Hook neighbors. Let's thank them.

[Applause]

And I want to thank all the members of this administration who are devoted, not only to serving the public every day, but to making sure we're prepared. First and foremost, our commissioner of the Office of Emergency Management, Joe Esposito, who is already doing a fantastic job getting us ready for anything.

[Applause]

From the housing authority our chair, Shola Olatoye, and our general manager, Cecil House. Let's thank them for all the good work they're doing to prepare NYCHA residents. From the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, the commissioner, Victor Calise. Thank you for your leadership.

[Applause]

The commissioner for the Department of Aging, Donna Corrado, thank you for your leadership.

[Applause]

The commissioner for the Community Affairs Unit, Marco Carrion. Thank you for all you do. And everything we're doing is related to what we learned from Sandy and how we are recovering from Sandy and building back stronger. A lot of that work falls to Dan Zarrilli, the director of the Office of Recovery and Resiliency. Let's thank Dan for the work he's doing.

[Applause]

And our good friends and allies, our local elected officials, Assembly Member Felix Ortiz and Council Member Carlos Menchaca. Thank you for all of your leadership.

[Applause]

So Sandy taught us a lot very painfully, a very difficult way. It taught us a lot we needed to know. And all of us who went through it learned and can't forget and can't fail to act on the lessons. It is a reminder of a new reality we're living with, the reality of climate change. The events that we used to consider extreme weather are becoming more common. We can't act like

they're unexpected. We have to assume they're coming and be ready. And we're committed to addressing the root causes of global warming. And we'll be saying a lot more about that in the next few weeks as we lead up to the United Nations global summit on climate change in September. Every city, every state, every nation has to do their share to try and reverse what's afflicting us. But in the meantime, we have so much to do to prepare ourselves – to prepare ourselves physically, to make our city more resilient and safe, but also to prepare our people. Because a lot of what matters is the human element, people being ready for what's thrown at them, being ready to help their fellow New Yorker. So there is a physical element to resiliency and there is a human element too. We weren't prepared enough on the human side when Sandy hit. We learned a lot of lessons. Everyone here is committed to applying those lessons, and especially Joe Esposito has a particular responsibility, who understands the people of this city very, very well. And we have to help empower them to protect themselves and protect their neighbors.

Now the physical part is on our mind every day as well. Strengthening our defenses against any kind of storm that might hit. Let me give you some of the facts. In Brooklyn, 600,000 cubic yards of new sand have been put in place to protect Coney Island. Staten Island, 26,000 linear feet of dunes have been rebuilt between South Beach and Conference House Park to protect Staten Island. In Queens and the Rockaways, 2.5 million cubic yards of sand in place to protect the Rockaways, another half-million cubic yards coming.

We've also won important support, not just from the Army Corps of Engineers that's done so much of the important work I discussed a moment ago, but also from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. We won major awards from HUD for resiliency projects – \$335 million for an integrated flood protection program around the lower part of the East River that will particularly protect one of our biggest concentrations of public housing and affordable housing; \$20 million for flood mitigation at Hunts Point in the Bronx, where our food supply is centered; \$60 million for a living shoreline, for natural remedies restoring what mother nature had in place to protect against storms, restoring that living shoreline and the wetlands, etcetera on Staten Island, \$60 million to recreate that buffer.

And we've been increasing the city's resiliency efforts in other areas as well. New laws have been enacted to require flood-resistant construction for healthcare facilities, and to require emergency plans for residential and commercial buildings. We take it all very seriously. And every day that we have good weather is another day that we can continue the work of preparing for the future. We've adopted new policies to protect critical infrastructure, including the Department of Environmental Protection guidelines to protect sewage treatment plants and pumping stations from future storm surge and sea level rise. And we're working in particular to strengthen Red Hook. One example, we're working with the State of New York to develop a comprehensive flood protection system for Red Hook, something this neighborhood needs. And it's a high priority for us.

And also in Red Hook, I want to thank Shola and Cecil for their extraordinary efforts because we know that Red Hook East and Red Hook West felt the brunt of Sandy so intensely. We're in the process of replacing the boilers in those developments with stronger, more resilient ones that will be better able to handle future storms.

So the physical part is moving along strongly. We have a lot to do. It will take years to get it all done. But we're moving aggressively. The human element has to be attended to – training people, preparing them, letting them know what to do, letting them know how to help each other. People need to know what to do, what the next steps are when a storm is coming. And that's why we got together today with people who have been trained and we started passing out go bags to neighborhood residents because it's a simple but important step. Having something ready for any emergency – first aid kit, flashlight, bottled water and energy bars. Making sure that parents remember to bring everything they need for their children, making sure folks who need medications remember to have it right there ready to go. Because when they need to leave, all that matters – ID cards, insurance documents, everything you need.

Every New Yorker should have an emergency plan, a personal emergency plan of what to do. Every New Yorker should have a go bag or something like it. And we have a model guide here. This is the hard copy version, which is a really simple, straightforward guide that tells people how to get ready, to literally go through this and get ready, make sure their home is ready for an emergency. And as we like to do, you'll see on the back many languages represented of where you can get more information in a variety of languages spoken in this city. And, if you're a modern, online kind of person, you can go to [www.nyc.gov/knowyourzone](http://www.nyc.gov/knowyourzone) so people know where they are, how vulnerable they are and what it would mean in the event of an evacuation. Obviously at any time, any New Yorker can call 311 for any information about how to prepare when storm events are coming.

So I'll finish by saying we know there will be storms. And we know there will be extreme weather. We know we can and must do more to get ready, and that's what today is about. And if we do that, we'll be safer. Lives will be saved, people will be able to avoid the negative effect of storms. People will be able to get back on their feet quicker and better. That's what we're here to do. Again, the man who has the primary responsibility for getting us ready each and every time and is doing a fantastic job, our commissioner of the Office of Emergency Management, Joe Esposito.

[BREAK]

**Question:** [inaudible] speak a little bit about where we are [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Cecil and Shola will come up. I'd like to say to begin, the backlog and repairs is a whole of host of kinds of challenges. Many of them have nothing to do with Sandy but some of them – many of them predate Sandy. So we are addressing that very aggressively. But within that is also the work of doing specific things to make developments more resilient. So, why don't we let Shola and Cecil speak to that.

**NYCHA Chair Shola Olatoye:** Thank you. So, the mayor is exactly right, which is to say that, the NYCHA that we inherited –

**Mayor:** Louder.

**Chair Olatoye:** – the NYCHA that we inherited had significant backlogs. But really, due to the work of the general manager and his team, that number has come down to about 83,000. And the investments that this administration has made since taking office – some more than \$210 million dollars has actually helped us to accelerate that work, and address the critical repairs that residents are in need of. So, you know, we're obviously here in Red Hook – there's a ton of work happening, both Sandy-related and others, and I'll let the general manager speak to those.

**Mayor:** Can you give some examples?

**NYCHA General Manager Cecil House:** Of the 420-some thousand work orders that were outstanding as part of that backlog, there are about 2,000 work orders that remain outstanding from before, and with the funds that the mayor provided us earlier this year, we're on target to eliminate those final 2-3,000 work orders that are outstanding. But you have to keep in mind that NYCHA creates, every day, about 10,000 new requests for work. And so, we have a service level of about seven days, and so in that context, we will generally have about 70-80,000 work orders outstanding at all times, even if we're meeting that seven day, 15 day service level.

And then what we're trying to do as a result of the work that we're doing with Hurricane Sandy, is to actually make the developments – not just make the repairs that are required, but to make the developments operate better. For example, you see the temporary boilers here at Red Hook. So, we're going to replace those temporary boilers with elevated boilers. But not just replacing the boilers with the same boilers that were there, we're going to replace them with better, more efficient boilers. In addition, the distribution system – that in these developments is so challenged, and has been taxed after Hurricane Sandy – will get an upgrade as well. So, pipes will be replaced; traps will be replaced; radiators will be replaced – so that coming out of this process, the development not only will have better, elevated boilers, but it will actually have a heating system that works more effectively. And that approach is being applied over and over and over as a result of the work coming out of the hurricane, just to make the developments operate better, and more resilient, for the residents that live here.

**Mayor:** On topic. On topic. Yes.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** I think we feel good about the basic division of labor. I think we – we have to be stronger at the community piece, and the connection between government and community. This is something that Joe Esposito – again, who knows this city like the back of his hand, after just a few years in public service – understands. We didn't have enough people trained. We didn't have enough communication with community leaders and community organizations. We just weren't in the position we needed to be. And another thing we're constantly going to work on is developing a communication network, so that if god forbid, we give the order to evacuate, people understand what it means, and are ready to go, and the word spreads quickly, et cetera. So, I like the basic structure, and I like very much the role that OEM plays, but I think we have to train a lot more people and communicate a lot better.  
On topic. On topic. Going once. Yes.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** August 1.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Well, in New York City – let's let the expert speak to it.

**Commissioner Joe Esposito, Office of Emergency Management:** New York City – New York City hurricane season starts today. It's roughly three months. In New York City.

**Mayor:** You can say no, but he's the emergency commissioner so listen to him.

In New York City, this is the standard we hold. This is the standard we hold. On topic. On topic, media?

**Question:** Do you have an update on the governor's \$200 million dollar plan for the building something off the coast of Red Hook?

**Mayor:** As I said, we're working with the state. This is the flood – the flood protection – we're working with the state. We are very hopeful. What we need in this to happen next is the approval of FEMA. Still some work to do there, but we're hopeful that we're going to get a good result.

On topic. On topic. On topic, going once. Going twice. Off topic. Off topic.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** We are constantly preparing. And I think that all of our agencies – NYPD and FDNY and OEM – are literally the gold standard on this earth for how to protect a locality. So, this is a typical thing – there really are different types of exercises happening all the time. There is – I want to affirm, despite events overseas, there is not a new specific threat that we're facing. This is part of our ongoing preparation. Dave?

**Question:** [inaudible] who see Al Sharpton as controversial, divisive figure [inaudible] perhaps he had too much to say yesterday in City Hall, [inaudible] people are concerned that he has too much power in City Hall, what do you tell them?

**Mayor:** Well, I don't – I appreciate the question Dave, but I don't look at the civic dialogue that way. I think we have to think about what we're saying to all New Yorkers. We have something we have to act on in this city. We have reforms we have to make. We have to rebuild trust between police and community. We have to continue to make the city safer while building mutual respect between police and community in every neighborhood. I think Reverend Sharpton's been active and productive on those issues for decades. He's someone who is certainly a personal friend, and someone I respect the advice of. So, if he's in a meeting, and other ministers, and elected officials like Council Member Debi Rose, who played, I think, an extraordinarily positive and productive role in the event of the tragedy – in the aftermath, I

should say, of the tragedy in Staten Island. Everyone has a right to speak. One of the things that's different about this City Hall than previous City Halls is we welcome people coming in and offering their views. We don't have to agree with all of them, but I am never afraid to have someone come in and offer their views. And it was a very productive dialogue, and it's part of moving forward in this city. Jonathan?

**Question:** What's your reaction to the Reverend's calls [inaudible] your own son, and said that he – your son – could be placed in a chokehold [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** Look, I think he has a right to offer any example he wants. I think the larger issue here is that we know we have some work to do. This incident was a tragedy. There's obviously a full investigation going on. But as Commissioner Bratton said in the aftermath, you know, chokeholds have not been allowable under any normal circumstances within the NYPD for over 30 years. So, we have some work to do to make sure, through our new training efforts, and through our command structure, that we don't see the use of chokeholds. Now again, there may be some extraordinary life-and-death circumstance, but as a typical matter, it's not supposed to be a part of policing, and our job is to make sure it isn't.

**Question:** You don't feel it was inappropriate for him to mention your son –

**Mayor:** No.

**Question:** How do you characterize the relationship between [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** I think it's a very productive relationship. Again, they don't have to agree on everything. But, you can ask Reverend Sharpton, he'll be one of the people who'll tell you, from his own experience in Los Angeles, that Bill Bratton did something absolutely extraordinary and historic there in repairing substantially the relationship between police and community in a very, very troubled environment. One of the people who actually speaks most vehemently about how impressive that achievement is, is Al Sharpton. So, they'll disagree from time to time, but they have, I think, a respectful and positive relationship.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Right.

**Question:** [inaudible] including training, including broken windows theory [inaudible] I'm wondering how you felt about that criticism [inaudible] procedure, and also, he said that he's going to be your worst enemy [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Well, I want to separate two pieces. On the question of a democracy and what people say in a democracy – I think we know the work that Reverend Sharpton's done over decades. I think what he's saying simply is, he expects to see some positive change. If he doesn't, he's going to use the democratic process to effect that change. That's fine. That doesn't worry me. I don't worry whether someone comes from one perspective or another perspective, from left or from right – it's the democratic process. I'm not afraid of anyone challenging me to do my job. I've set

the standard for what we have to do in this city, repeatedly, and we're going to meet that standard.

On the question of the criticism, I happen to disagree with Reverend Sharpton on both those points. The training is quintessential to change. Now I can understand that if people hear the word training, they may think it's superficial or temporary. Bill Bratton doesn't do things in a small way, or an inconsequential way. Bill Bratton is the, I think, one of the greatest police reformers and architects of effective policing in the history of this country. He's saying we're going to systematically retrain the police department to make sure people understand how best to work with communities, and to be effective. And then that goes into the question of broken windows. I think in this city we need a better dialogue around what broken windows is and what it isn't. Broken windows, to me – I think I can say this also for Commissioner Bratton – is about addressing small things before they turn into big things, is about showing that there will be a consistent response to citizen complaints, because that's what generates a lot of police activity. Someone called 311 or 911, or went to the station house and said, here is a problem in my community, I'd like it to be addressed. And that conforms immediately to community policing, meaning we want any citizen who comes forward with a problem to know it's being taken seriously and being addressed. But Commissioner Bratton will also tell you that police officers have a wide range of options available to them, as he said yesterday. They can admonish, they can warn, they can give a summons, depending on the offense, they can arrest. Arrest is not the only option. And we want to create a dialogue where we solve a lot of problems up front, and proactively – that's broken windows to me. It is solving problems in a preventative, proactive fashion.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** I think the core philosophy is very sound, and again, I'd urge everyone to express it in its totality. Broken windows as a strategy, along with CompStat, is one of the reasons why, over the last 20 years, we became the safest big city in America. If someone says, are there specific things we want to constantly try and do better, are there trends we might want to address in a particular manner? Of course. We do that every day. The whole concept of CompStat is to look at what we're doing and try to do it better. So, within broken windows there's absolutely room to say, 'Hey, this approach is working, maybe this approach we're going to try something different.' Certainly within the retraining, you're going to see a lot of officers have new ideas, and I think better ideas, of how to approach situations. But the core philosophy I absolutely agree with.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** I just don't feel that. I don't feel that. I've worked with him for years – again, we are New Yorkers. We all have strong opinions. We don't all have to agree on everything. But Reverend Sharpton clearly has pointed always in the direction of peaceful protest, and the use of the democratic process to make change. And I give him credit for that. He's always reminded people, no matter how upset they may be, or how troubled, that we have to work peacefully for the change we need, and I honor him for that. Do I agree with everything he says? No. But I think he's been respectful and we have a productive relationship.



**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Dante is a very sophisticated young man, and very knowledgeable. So, yes, of course I told him what happened, and I think his broad view is, you know, he understands he happens to be in the public eye. It doesn't really affect him much – he has his own life, he has his own approach. It's nothing particularly new to him. I wish I could interpret how unusual the situation is – Dante is someone who is really, very, very mature. So, he's aware of it, and to him it's just another day in this work we do. Thank you, everyone.

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