



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**CITY UPDATES NEW YORKERS ON SEVERE WEATHER RECOVERY EFFORTS**

*City Meets Federal Threshold for Public Assistance and Will Seek Major Disaster Declaration*

*1,156 Reports of Fallen Trees Have Been Closed*

*7,870 calls to 311 to report tree damage, the most calls to report forestry damage in 311's history*

Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Commissioner Joseph F. Bruno and Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe today joined Sanitation (DSNY) First Deputy Commissioner Bernard J. Sullivan, Transportation (DOT) Deputy Commissioner Leon Heyward, Police (NYPD) Deputy Chief James Molloy, Fire (FDNY) Deputy Assistant Chief James Leonard, Deputy Buildings (DOB) Emergency Response Team Director Amaury Perez, and Department of Design and Construction (DDC) Deputy Commissioner Eric Macfarlane to update New Yorkers on the progress of the storm clean-up, what's next for the recovery, and how New Yorkers can advance efforts in their neighborhoods.

“The Department of Sanitation is proud to work closely with the other City agencies as we assist them in restoring neighborhoods that were severely affected by the battering storm which hit parts of Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island two weeks ago,” said First Deputy Commissioner Bernard J. Sullivan. “Sanitation removed 768 tons of fallen tree trunks, branches, and limbs which will be chipped while still providing essential refuse and recycling collection services. The immense amount of work completed clearly speaks to the commitment shown by all the agencies to return residents and their neighborhoods back to everyday life.”

The sudden storm hit New York City at approximately 5:45 PM on Thursday, September 16, and brought heavy rain and winds near 100 mph to neighborhoods in Staten Island, Brooklyn, and Queens. The storm also produced two tornadoes: one in Park Slope, Brooklyn, and another near Flushing and Bayside in Queens. In the aftermath of the storm 45,000 Con Ed customers were without power, more than 70 roads were blocked by debris, and thousands of trees and hundreds of homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed. OEM immediately activated the City's EOC to coordinate the efforts of City agencies responding to the storm. Agencies represented in the EOC include OEM, Parks, DSNY, NYPD, FDNY, DOT and DOB.

**Major Disaster Declaration:**

On Wednesday, September 22, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Federal Small Business Administration began conducting a preliminary damage assessment to determine if the City qualifies for federal disaster aid through the Stafford Act. FEMA's initial assessment shows that storm damage and clean-up efforts will cost more than \$24.5 million, the federal threshold needed for New York State to apply for a Major Disaster Declaration. Each county must also meet a separate cost threshold that is determined by population. FEMA's preliminary assessment also shows that damage and clean-up will exceed the thresholds of \$7.2 million in Queens, \$7.9 million in Kings and \$1.4 million in Richmond, making all three counties eligible to apply for public assistance.

New York City has asked Governor Patterson to request a Major Disaster Declaration from President Obama. If the President issues a Major Disaster Declaration for Queens, Brooklyn and Staten Island, FEMA would provide federal reimbursement to public agencies and eligible private not-for-profits for the cost of the clean-up and repairs to damaged sidewalks, parks, playgrounds, and other public facilities and infrastructure.

However, a Major Disaster Declaration, alone, does not make uninsured individuals or small businesses eligible for federal aid. In addition to the thresholds for public assistance, described above, FEMA and the federal Small Business Administration use separate criteria to determine if individuals and small businesses who suffered uninsured losses are eligible for federal aid or low interest loans. FEMA has *not yet* determined if New York City has met the criteria for individual assistance.

### **Storm Impact**

Since Thursday night, there have been more than 7,870 calls to 311 to report tree damage, the most calls to report forestry damage in 311's history. Those calls included:

- 3,415 calls to report downed trees
- 1,325 calls to report hanging limbs
- 3,120 calls to report fallen limbs

More than 440 calls have also been logged through 311's Damage Assessment Tool, which collects information about storm damage to homes and businesses. In addition, DOB has issued 27 vacate orders to buildings due to storm damage. Two structures, including a house in Brooklyn, have also undergone emergency demolition.

The storm left nearly 45,000 Con Ed customers without power Thursday night. Power was restored to 95% of customers by Saturday night. Con Ed also distributed more than 40,000 pounds of dry ice to customers during the power outage.

### **Recovery Efforts**

Since Thursday night OEM has been coordinating the efforts of City, county, state and federal agencies at New York City's EOC in downtown Brooklyn. Highlights of the agencies' work include:

- More than 200 crews from the City as well Nassau, Suffolk and Westchester Counties have been working daily to cut and remove damaged trees.
- Nearly 800 City employees from Parks, DSNY, and DOT have been assigned to tree removal duties daily.
- In addition, FDNY rapid response teams have responded to 1,350 tree cleaning assignments in Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island.
- NYPD’s Emergency Service Units have also responded to nearly 400 locations for tree removal assignments.
- The City has closed out 1,156 of the 3,459 reports of downed trees.
- Every street blocked by debris (more than 70 streets) was reopened to traffic by Wednesday night.
- 45,000 Con Ed customers have had their electricity restored by Sunday.

### **Private Tree Removal Service Improvement**

In an effort to make it easier for residents to get trees in their neighborhood cleared, the Parks Department has put new information on its website. On the agency’s homepage, under “features,” Parks has a new form that allows residents affected by the storm to work with approved private contractors to remove or prune trees. Parks has also provided the names and phone numbers of approved tree care specialists. Homeowners will be responsible for paying the bill and can apply for reimbursement from the Comptroller’s Office. Information about reimbursements can be found at the Comptroller’s website under “filing claims” at [www.comptroller.nyc.gov](http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov) or by calling 311. For more information on private tree removal visit [www.nyc.gov/parks](http://www.nyc.gov/parks) or call 311.

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