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NEW YORK CITY **OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**  
Office of Public Information

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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Update #3, 7/19/2007, 6:30 AM

**UPDATE ON THE CITY'S RESPONSE TO THE STEAM PIPE EXPLOSION**

*No Air Samples Test Positive for Asbestos, Clean-Up Plan for Debris and Equipment That Tested Positive for Asbestos Began Overnight*

*Individuals Who Live and Work in the Frozen Zone Will Not be Permitted to Enter the Area During Clean-Up*

The City's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) continues to coordinate the inter-agency response to the steam pipe explosion on Lexington Avenue. City agencies continue to operate in the area. All emergencies should be reported to 911.

The following is an update of the City's response to the affected area:

*Department of Environmental Protection*

The Department of Environmental Protection's Bureau of Environmental Compliance has conducted an assessment of air and debris in the area and determined that of eight air samples taken, none tested positive for asbestos. Out of 10 bulk samples – debris and dust – taken from the surrounding area, six registered positive for asbestos and four were negative. With the positive bulk sample readings, DEP will continue testing to further determine the contents of the debris at and away from the site of the explosion.

*Department of Health and Mental Hygiene*

While exposure to asbestos over many years carries known health risks, the brief exposures that people may have experienced after last night's steam pipe break are not likely to cause long-term health consequences. Developing an asbestos-related illness after being exposed for a short time – even at high levels – is very unlikely. Although we can never say if something is completely safe, from all the information we have obtained, there are unlikely to be long term physical health consequences.

OSHA, the federal Occupational Safety & Health Administration, is on-scene to make sure that workers in the area are taking proper precautions.



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As detailed during the Mayor's briefing, people who may have come into contact with the steam or debris should take a shower and place their clothes in plastic bags for cleaning or disposal.

People inside buildings in the frozen zone should keep windows closed and switch air-conditioners to re-circulate the air inside instead of drawing in air from outside.

For more information on asbestos please visit:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/ei/eiasbest.shtml>

*Clean-Up Began Last Night*

The clean-up of dirt and debris has begun, led by specially trained contractors. The clean-up of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue has been completed and will be re-opened following electrical work necessary to support the network in the area.

*Frozen Zone Remains in Place*

In an abundance of caution, and to facilitate an expeditious clean-up, the frozen zone will remain in place. The frozen zone is comprised of the area between 40<sup>th</sup> Street and 43<sup>rd</sup> Street and between Vanderbilt Avenue and Third Avenue. While individuals who are already in the frozen zone are permitted to stay where they are, individuals are not permitted to enter the zone from outside the area. As clean-up work progresses, the City will work to shrink the size of the frozen zone.

Members of the media are requested to emphasize to their viewers, listeners, and readers that people who work in the frozen zone, between 40th and 43rd Streets and between Vanderbilt Avenue to Third Avenue, will not be permitted to enter the area on Thursday morning.

*Equipment Staging Area Established*

A limited-access equipment staging area created by OEM, the NYPD, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene exists from 38th St to 45th St from Park Avenue to 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue to allow emergency equipment into the area. While residents and employees of businesses will be allowed into the equipment staging area, vehicles will not be allowed to enter.

*Department of Buildings*

Buildings inspectors and forensic engineers remain on the scene to assist the Office of Emergency Management with structural assessments and engineering expertise.

*Community Assistance Unit*

The Mayor's Community Assistance Unit continues to work with affected building owners and local elected officials.



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*Department of Transportation*

The following streets in the area surrounding the steam pipe explosion remain closed to vehicles, as previously announced:

- Lexington Avenue is closed from 57<sup>th</sup> Street to 34<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Third Avenue is closed from 38<sup>th</sup> Street to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street.
- Park Avenue is closed from 54<sup>th</sup> Street to 34<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 42<sup>nd</sup> Street is closed from Park Avenue to Third Avenue.
- Vanderbilt Avenue is closed for its entire length from 42<sup>nd</sup> Street to 47<sup>th</sup> Street.

*MTA*

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority has informed OEM that there are no structural defects or breaches of the subway infrastructure. In addition, no debris from the explosion was found in the subway tunnels in the area.

Metro-North continues to operate regular service into and out of Grand Central Terminal. As announced at the 8:00 briefing, customers may only enter and exit Grand Central via the Met Life Building and Grand Central North at 47th Street.

The 4, 5 and 6 IRT lines have returned to a normal schedule, but service is bypassing Grand Central at reduced speed. The 7 line continues to bypass Grand Central at reduced speed. The 42nd Street Shuttle (S) remains suspended

Passengers on the 4 and 5 lines traveling southbound and headed to destinations near Grand Central are advised to, if possible, transfer to a downtown 6 train at the 59th/Lexington station for service to 51st Street or 33rd Street. Passengers on the 4 and 5 lines traveling northbound and headed to destinations near Grand Central are advised to, if possible, transfer to an uptown #6 train at 14th Street/Union Square station for service to 33rd Street.

Bus Service is re-routed in the vicinity of the area on the M101, M102, M103 and M98. The M104 and M42 buses terminate at Times Square/42nd Street.