

NEWS FROM NYC MAYOR'S OFFICE OF OPERATIONS

NYC Customer Service Newsletter **Volume 5 Issue 2 - February 2013** **Special Edition - Hurricane Sandy Response**

Hurricane Sandy had a devastating impact on New York City, especially in seaside communities in Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island. There was tragic loss of life, as well as destruction of homes and other properties. In accord with citywide preparations, the City's emergency services and other agencies responded admirably. These heroic responses received well-deserved coverage in local, national and even international media. But there were other City agency responses to this crisis that did not garner as much, or even any, media attention. These efforts were critical in their own way in addressing the sundry challenges and inconveniences created by Sandy's fury. The following are important examples of other less-heralded ways in which City agencies and their staff responded before, during and after the crisis to address their customers' needs.

Department of Citywide Administrative Services Makes Fuel Available to Critical Services after Hurricane Sandy

Hurricane Sandy caused the most serious fuel crisis ever to impact New York City. With terminals and retail locations damaged or off-line, fueling was in short supply in the City and gas stations throughout the region were marked by closed signs or incredibly long lines. Nonetheless DCAS could not afford disruption in operating the City's critical emergency and essential fleet assets, whether part of the 27,000 City-owned fleet units or essential private assets including ambulances, school busses, utility vehicles, doctors' and nurses' vehicles, and access-a-ride vehicles.



DCAS Staff Fueling Other Agencies' Vehicles after Hurricane Sandy

During Sandy, through NYC Fleet at DCAS and the Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability's Energy unit, the City quickly scaled up a major fuel sharing operation involving City agencies, the US Military and National Guard, and private retailers including Hess. NYPD used its 59 fuel sites to fuel all City agencies and official vehicles 24/7 during the first weeks after the storm, and most other agencies with fuel assets did the same. The State National Guard, in partnership with the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), National Park Service, NYC Parks, and the Federal Emergency Management Administration established 24-hour-a-day fueling for critical responders at Floyd Bennett Field and other sites throughout the City, fueling tens of thousands of vehicles. The National Guard also conducted various missions to coastal areas to bring gas

directly to residents impacted by the storm.

Hess allowed the City to focus ten of the retailer's locations, two in each borough, on essential and emergency equipment fueling. The City's fuel providers, Castle and Sprague, delivered over 60% more fuel than normal during this shortage crisis, not less. Working together, with little time and under enormous pressure, DCAS established the City's largest ever program of fuel sharing and kept the City's critical emergency and essential assets on the road.

Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications Provides Critical Wireless Radio Services to Emergency Responders

DoITT's Wireless Technologies team worked throughout the storm and recovery efforts to program hundreds of DoITT radios in support of Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, National Guard, National EMS, Red Cross, and FEMA teams. There was heavy reliance on radio systems during and after Hurricane Sandy as they were among the only reliable means of voice communications for critical response.



DoITT's cell-on-wheels tower – one of many deployed in the impacted zones – beamed out cell service through the vertical mast.

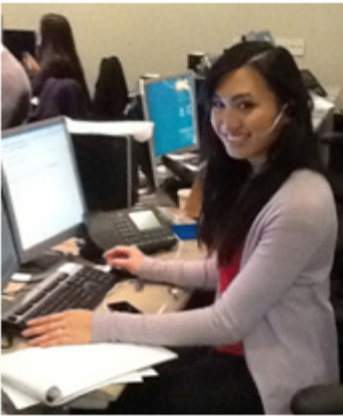
Radio networks consistently perform at 100% uptime during emergency situations, and DoITT's two distinct mission-critical radio systems served over 40 city agencies throughout the disaster, including the Healthcare Evacuation Center's efforts to safely evacuate patients and residents to destination hospitals, nursing homes, and adult care facilities. Reliable radio access ensured that hospital administrators were able to communicate with the City's Office of Emergency Management despite cell network and landline outages.

In addition to more than 900 radios, the group also deployed satellite communications, laptops, and NYCWiN modems, and coordinated cell-on-wheels towers, emergency generators, and mobile charging stations in areas with service disruptions.

[View more photos of DoITT's wireless technologies hurricane response and recovery efforts](#)

DoITT Staff Answer NYC-311 Calls during Hurricane Sandy

Every day, and most especially during crises, the 311 Call Center is a primary outlet for New Yorkers to communicate with their City. During Hurricane Sandy, 311 received five times the average call volume – nearly 200,000 calls per day – yet this vital DoITT-supported, public-facing service functioned with little interruption.



R. Nicky Despi, from DoITT's Audits and Accounts, volunteering at the temporary 311 Call Center.

To keep the connection to information and services running seamlessly, DoITT implemented emergency workarounds. Network and IT Services set up a temporary call center at MetroTech Brooklyn, redirecting regular DoITT phone lines so that volunteer-DoITT staff could take calls, helping to reduce wait-times and provide much-needed support to those on the other end of the phone.

More than 30 non-311 DoITT staff took calls in the days following the storm. They addressed a constant flow of inquiries fielding questions and responding to concerns from downed trees to the emergency shelter locations. During high-pressure times, these dedicated staff helped facilitate recovery efforts, getting information out quickly and effectively.

To address the usual uptick in volume prior to Election Day and the anticipated difficulties and confusion created by Hurricane Sandy's impact on polling places, volunteers from the Department of Finance, the Department of Investigation and the Mayor's Office also took calls during the days prior to and on Election Day.

Department of Probation Addresses Client and Staff Needs in Response to Hurricane Sandy

On Monday, October 29, DOP posted a message on its website notifying clients that DOP offices would be closed in anticipation of the storm and that all client visits were cancelled. As DOP offices reopened after the storm, the re-openings were posted on DOP's website, and clients were informed that they could report to the probation office most convenient to them, and that they would not be penalized if they could not safely report to any office. After the hurricane, DOP staff immediately reached out to the highest-risk/need clients via phone and in-person to make sure they were stable and not posing a risk to public safety.

A number of DOP staff members suffered great losses. In response to the outpouring of messages from co-workers, friends and even strangers asking how they could help, DOP established Amazon Wish List registries for ten impacted staff members. (If you are interested in granting wishes, please contact Michael Ognibene at mognibene@probation.nyc.gov or 212-361-8975.)

DOP also created **NYC YouthWRAP** (Weekend Restoration Assistance Program), a 13 weekend program that will deploy teams of 10 youth and 2 DOP staff to assist communities that suffered greatest under Hurricane Sandy. Storm-related assignments include community benefit projects directly in the communities (light load debris clean-up, public parks) or with support organizations that distribute goods (food, blankets) and services to the impacted communities. Youth participants will receive a stipend from DOP and can earn up to \$1,720.



NYC YouthWRAP participants in Shore Park Brooklyn in front of bags of debris they helped remove from the park.

The program began the weekend of January 5, 2013 and runs through March 31, 2013. Inaugural projects for January 5-6 were at Sara Roosevelt Park (2 teams), Canarsie Park (2 teams), Shore Park, Brooklyn (2 teams) and the Bay Ridge Kitchen at St. John's Episcopal Church (2 teams). **If there are any storm-related projects that could absorb teams of 12, please reach out to Carolina Garrido, Project Coordinator at CGarrido@probation.nyc.gov or at 212.361.8969.** Projects don't need to be located in the impacted communities, but must serve the impacted communities.

Department of Finance Takes Steps to Aid New Yorkers Hard Hit by Hurricane Sandy

Like many city agencies, the Department of Finance (Finance) has taken steps to aid New Yorkers that were hard hit by Hurricane Sandy. Specifically, Finance extended the property tax due date for residential properties tagged red, marking them as uninhabitable or destroyed, by the Department of Buildings. For these properties, taxes that would have been due on January 1, 2013 are now due on April 1, 2013.

Finance also created a quick way for owners of properties severely damaged during the storm to report Hurricane Sandy damage to online at www.nyc.gov/finance. Property owners can also download the Property Damage Reporting form posted online, pick it up at any Finance Business Center, NYC Restoration Center, or contact 311 to have it mailed. The quickest way to report the damage is by filling out the online form at <https://dofpropertydamage.cityofnewyork.us/>

The Department's Property Assessors and Outreach staff have made themselves available to assist people in reporting damage through various outreach events and open hours at Finance's assessment offices. In addition, Finance is working to obtain alternative contact information for properties that were most hard hit by the storm, which will be used in addition to the existing addresses on the notices Finance sends to property owners.

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Hurricane Sandy Update

Information for Property Owners Affected by Hurricane Sandy

The Department of Finance has extended the January 1st property tax due date for certain taxpayers to help them with difficulties that occurred because of Hurricane Sandy. Below is more information about steps that the City is taking for certain damaged properties.

We understand that your property may have had damage as a result of Hurricane Sandy. This page will help you figure out what you can do if your property was severely damaged.

Delayed property tax due dates for certain properties with Hurricane Sandy damage
On November 29, 2012, the Mayor, Department of Finance, and City Council announced that certain residential properties that had severe property damage due to Hurricane Sandy will have three extra

Finance is also hard at work ensuring that severely damaged properties are valued accurately for next year's tax assessments. Some examples of severe damage include collapsed buildings, severely buckling walls, or other conditions that would make the building dangerous to occupy. To help direct property owners in the right direction, Finance has a Hurricane Sandy webpage at

http://www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/property/property_hurricane_sandy_reporting.shtml.

Finance has also posted detailed information online, including a Hurricane Sandy Property Tax Relief info sheet that is available in English, Spanish, Chinese and Russian. Copies can also be found at NYC Restorations Centers, Finance Business Centers, and outreach events where Finance staff is on hand to answer questions and assist with filling out forms. Finance continues to work with elected officials' offices to schedule Hurricane Sandy focused outreach events and spread the word about the information we have available.

Department of Parks and Recreation Recruits and Organizes Volunteers to Clean Up Parks and Playgrounds

With many parks, playgrounds, beaches and other properties damaged by the storm, the Parks Department engaged a network of volunteers to assist with clean-up efforts. Although Parks staff worked quickly to get as many properties open as possible, given the extent of the damage to a large number of properties, it was too much to rely on staff alone. In Lower Manhattan, floodwater damaged several properties, including East River Park, Battery Park and the recently opened Imagination Playground. In Staten Island, many parks and playgrounds were inaccessible due to the amount of storm debris and downed trees. At Coney Island, storm debris lined the beach. In Rockaway, portions of the boardwalk lay in the street and sand covered the playgrounds and sports fields adjacent to the beach.



Volunteers helping clean up the playground at Beach 30th Street

The Parks Department, working with Partnerships for Parks and NYC Service, assessed volunteer supplies and identified potential volunteer sites. Parks staff coordinated supply needs, tallied volunteer accomplishments at multiple sites, and coordinated with Partnerships for Park staff to ensure that all sites

were supported. Partnerships for Parks and NYC Service led the effort to recruit volunteers, drawing on Parks' existing volunteer network as well as many first-time volunteers who wanted to help in any way possible. The first weekend, November 2-4, 2012, brought out more than 3,800 volunteers to clean up 24 sites. The call to service continued and several clean-up projects were organized throughout the city.

In total, from November 2 through December 16, 2012, there were 117 volunteer clean-up days at 53 sites (parks, playgrounds, and beaches) located throughout the five boroughs. More than 7,300 volunteers showed up for these projects and collected nearly 23,000 bags of debris. These volunteers also cleared trails and park pathways, removed damaged safety surfacing from playgrounds, removed shoreline debris and sand from playgrounds, collected piles of tree limbs, and performed many more valuable and productive tasks. Thanks to these volunteer efforts, our parks and facilities were opened to the public sooner than expected.

Department of Consumer Affairs Protects Consumers in the Wake of Hurricane Sandy

For thousands of homeowners affected by Hurricane Sandy, the most critical need has been restoring or rebuilding damaged homes and apartments. To respond to that need, DCA expedited the licensing of home improvement contractors to get unlicensed contractors or contractors who normally work outside of New York licensed and working on repairs. New licenses were issued in only two days compared to the usual median of 10 days.

DCA also mailed information about using a licensed contractor to more than 150,000 New Yorkers in the hardest-hit areas to ensure that they would not be taken advantage of by unscrupulous contractors. DCA's inspectors also contacted homeowners door-to-door. The Department partnered with the Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan New York, BJ's Wholesale Club, Home Depot, Lowe's, the National Association of Remodelers/Home Improvement Contractors of Staten Island, PortSide New York, and Sherwin Williams to distribute home improvement contractor information to the stores' customers, with customized information for consumers and contractors. DCA Commissioner Jonathan Mintz also recorded an interview about avoiding scams with FEMA (watch the video [here](#)).

Immediately following the storm, DCA was asked to participate in staffing the Mayor's NYC Restore Centers. DCA staff, Financial Empowerment Center counselors and DCA partners provided disaster-related financial guidance to thousands of people at those sites. They helped victims sign up for disaster unemployment assistance, understand what kinds of grants are available, how to start the application process, and how to file insurance claims. At the NYC Restore sites, DCA scheduled more than 100 appointments for one-on-one financial counseling at DCA's Financial Empowerment Centers. DCA also worked with sister agencies to compile a list of resources from the federal government and nonprofits, which were posted online, to help businesses and consumers navigate insurance coverage and file claims.

For tips on hiring a home improvement contractor, to file a complaint or to make an appointment for free one-on-one financial counseling at a New York City Financial Empowerment Center, visit www.nyc.gov/consumers.

Administration for Children's Services Responds to Hurricane Sandy by Meeting the Needs of Foster Care Families, Youth in Detention and Head Start Children

ACS collaborated with its contracted preventive services and foster care providers to ensure the safety of children and families in the system. Working with ACS, foster care agencies ensured that the 1,000 foster children residing in affected evacuation areas were identified, their foster families had plans for evacuation, and were provided support and services after the storm. In collaboration with preventive services providers, ACS used Investigative Consultants (former law enforcement officers) to locate any hard to find families through searches, telephone calls, and home visits.

Both of ACS' secure detention centers, Horizon Juvenile Center and Crossroads Juvenile Center, were fully operational throughout the storm. ACS' court transport unit coordinated staff transportation to and from facilities to ensure continuous shift coverage. Some staff even stayed overnight at the facilities. Despite storm

conditions and being without power, Horizon Juvenile Center was able to proceed with their youth Halloween activities, which included a competition for best decorated housing area and the telling of scary stories in the court yard. The activities helped to bring the young people together and maintain some sense of normalcy despite the uncertainty and disruption in power in the aftermath of the storm.

At the Division of Youth and Family Justice, the staff of Court Services/Transportation (CST) went above and beyond to become a critical link in ensuring full staffing and support for our youth in secure detention and across the division. The team traveled across the city to pick up staff and bring them to and from work, right through the very height of the storm, under extremely treacherous conditions. Once the Courts began to operate, CST staff also ensured that every child made it to court safely while managing dwindling gas supplies, complicated location changes, and gridlocked traffic.

In the wake of the storm, ACS immediately declared an emergency, which allowed the agency to open a new Head Start Center in Staten Island in the weeks following the hurricane. Working with the NYC Comptroller and Law Department, and partnering with the Staten Island Mental Health Society, Save the Children, and Community Playthings, ACS was able to provide early care and education services to families affected by the storm in Staten Island's South Beach and Midland Beach communities. This rapid mobilization provided 57 children with critical services. As their families continue to rebuild, the children at the new Dongan Hills Head Start Early Learn Center in Staten Island will receive early education and programming that will benefit them for life.

ACS' Children's Center and secure detention centers were also impacted by the power outages caused by the Hurricane. Backup generators provided electricity during the outage to allow for continuous operation, and make sure that children and young people in ACS' care remained safe. Prior to the power restoration, when the Children's Center was still without heat and hot water, ACS arranged daily outings for the children to provide them with recreational activities, which also allowed them access to hot showers. Partner organizations that hosted the children included Asphalt Green, the Harlem Children's Zone, Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.



Commissioner Ronald E. Richter and a staff member comfort a child at the Dongan Hills Head Start Early Learn Center, which opened on an emergency basis in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy

While ACS' central office building at 150 William Street was without electricity, ACS staff were spread across the City in borough offices to assist with relief efforts and complete their usual tasks. One of ACS' leaders in Family Court Legal Services (FCLS), Nancy Thomson, was placed in charge of managing operations at one of the City's Emergency Evacuation Centers. After reporting to the Center when she was unable to reach an ACS location, she was recruited to help run it, and was then asked to come back each day to make sure that the Center ran smoothly and that residents received proper care.

Department of Transportation Acts Swiftly to Support Customer Recovery after Hurricane Sandy

Despite the challenges brought about by Hurricane Sandy, DOT upheld the agency's commitment to delivering great service to customers throughout the City.



New Customer Service Desk -- Permit Management

The agency's Office of Permit Management at 55 Water Street in Lower Manhattan incurred severe flood damage during the storm. But just four days later, DOT opened a fully-operational temporary permit office at 30-30 Thomson Avenue in Long Island City, Queens and provided special accommodations to customers involved in emergency operations. In place of the normal process for generators, boilers, and cranes, DOT's Communications Center issued these customers a special reference number allowing them to proceed and later issued permits associated with the reference number.

Additionally, construction permits set to expire on October 29, 2012 were extended until November 15 free of charge provided bonds and insurance were valid. Permit requirements for commercial refuse containers were waived citywide until November 30 and are waived until further notice for Hurricane Flood Zone "A."



Temporary Permit Management Center in Queens 30-30 Thomson Avenue

And to help New Yorkers get back on their feet, DOT worked with the Department of Sanitation to suspend Alternate Side Parking regulations citywide through November 13, and until December 17 in the city's hardest-hit areas.

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Helps Families Locate Their Loved Ones who were Evacuated from Long Term Care Facilities

How could a family find a loved one who was evacuated from a long term care (LTC) facility during Hurricane Sandy? In an era of cell phones, it is easy to forget that some of the most vulnerable members of our society – residents of nursing homes or adult care facilities – are not always so easy to reach. Like everyone impacted by the storm, many LTC facility administrators needed to focus on the essentials during the storm: evacuating patients safely and caring for them, sometimes in temporary, non-traditional settings.

For the 1,700 patients evacuated to NYC-run temporary special medical needs shelters (SMNS), the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) anticipated the need to reconnect families with LTC patients and literally overnight conceived, designed, built and implemented the LTC Patient Tracking project. Starting on November 1, DOHMH deployed Patient Tracker teams and an LTC Tracking application to monitor patients around the clock who entered or left the eight SMNSs.

Through November 19, Patient Tracker teams worked closely with the shelter and LTC facility staff to keep up-to-date information of which SMNS or alternative facility each LTC resident was placed. Family members seeking their loved ones called 311 to reach the DOHMH Call Center. DOHMH Call Center staff verified the caller's connection to the LTC resident and then provided the information to connect the caller with their loved one. A central office team coordinated efforts across locations to ensure families were given the most current information about their loved one's location.

From November 1 through December 26, 2012, the DOHMH Call Center fielded 268 calls regarding LTC patients. Of those calls, 61% were regarding long-term care residents who were evacuated to SMNSs. The Call Center was able to advise the remaining 39% of callers either that their family or friend had been transferred directly to another health care facility, or that they were in an LTC facility that had not in fact been evacuated. In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, the Patient Tracker system helped almost 2,000 New Yorkers get peace of mind about the whereabouts of their loved ones.

Fire Department Resources Supplemented with Social Media via Twitter

As Hurricane Sandy slammed New York City, FDNY first responders were stretched to the limit, fighting fires and responding to medical emergencies. Some members of the public who faced difficulties during the storm came to the obvious conclusion that unprecedented times call for unprecedented measures: they reached out to social media. Emily Rahimi – who runs the FDNY Twitter account—responded to several people who reached out for help to the FDNY Twitter account. She stayed at her desk throughout the storm and proved to be a lifeline for many New Yorkers looking for information or, worse, looking to be rescued.



FDNY Social Media Strategist Emily Rahimi

While Emily is not a trained first responder, she has been the FDNY social media manager for four years. She tweets daily to her 61,000 followers about fire safety, stories about the great work of the FDNY, and photos from FDNY events and ceremonies. During emergencies, she sends out alerts and other information. Before Hurricane Sandy hit, Emily was prepared for the worst, but never anticipated the hundreds of

messages she received from people who needed help.

Emily posted updates on the storm surge, the crane dangling from the building on West 57th Street in Manhattan and the Breezy Point fire in Queens. In more dire instances, she offered advice and contacted FDNY dispatchers herself to make sure first responders were sent to help people in need.

Her efforts have earned her a flurry of praise and media attention, with [one headline calling her a "one-woman response team."](#) But Rahimi said the rescuers risking their lives were the real heroes of the storm. "I think the firefighters who were in six feet of water in Breezy Point trying to put out those fires are the heroes. And the EMS members, who are going house to house in boats trying to save people in severe conditions, not knowing what they're walking into -- they're the heroes."

Some people who sent her panicked tweets during the worst of the storm let her know that they were rescued. "It was nice because you kind of sit there and wonder, 'Did these people get help?'" Most did not realize she alone was responding to their tweets. One Twitter user said: "amazing to see the @FDNY using @Twitter to respond to emergencies." "I'd love to see the behind the scenes of how that's working."

Department of Homeless Services Joins City Response to Hurricane Sandy

On Friday, October 26, the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) joined the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and approximately 40 other agencies in implementing the City's Coastal Storm Plan (CSP). As part of the plan, low-lying areas throughout the five boroughs were ordered to evacuate, with DHS spearheading the charge to open and manage 76 hurricane shelters and evacuation centers for affected residents. DHS' Division of Security & Emergency Operations led the effort through the Unified Operations Resource Center (UORC) in downtown Brooklyn, where staff members worked with OEM, the Department of Education (DOE), the Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and the City University of New York (CUNY) to coordinate the operation of these sites. At the storm's peak on Monday evening, more than 6,800 New Yorkers were registered at the temporary shelter facilities Citywide.

Sandy marks the second time in 14 months that the City has activated its CSP, with Irene leaving her mark on New York in August of 2011. For both storms, DHS' unyielding oversight and management of the UORC remained imperative, as staff worked to mobilize supplies, track the number of evacuees at each site, and promote the overall efficiency of the system.

In addition to opening and operating centers for evacuees, DHS was also tasked with provisionally relocating shelter clients in Zone A areas. Clients from affected DHS shelters within both the Division of Adult Services and the Division of Family Services were transported to comparable facilities within the system. Furthermore, intake operations for single adult males and adult families were temporarily moved from 30th Street and the Adult Family Intake Center.



DHS staff members Erin Villari and Jonathan Kwon track statistics at the UORC in downtown Brooklyn during Hurricane Sandy

"Yet again, DHS had the complex task of managing both our own shelters and in overseeing the larger emergency system for evacuees," said DHS Commissioner Seth Diamond. "Thanks to lessons we learned from Irene, and the enormous dedication of City employees and volunteers, the plan was again executed well and helped thousands of New Yorkers get to safety during Sandy."

As in all cases of extreme weather, DHS- in collaboration with street outreach providers- also increased outreach efforts to the homeless in the days and hours leading up to the storm. Focusing on the most vulnerable clients, teams aimed to help as many individuals as possible move indoors and reserved emergency shelter beds specifically for this population. Operating under Code Blue/Code Red emergency procedures, all drop-in centers remained open 24 hours per day during this period, with clients also having access to any shelter or intake center. DHS also collaborated with the Police Department's Homeless Outreach Unit (HOU) in engagement and transport of street homeless individuals throughout the storm.

"I want to again commend every DHS employee who has contributed to the overall efforts of the UORC, evacuation centers, hurricane shelters, and DHS daily operations over the last several weeks," said Commissioner Diamond. "Although working during times like these is never easy, our work is critical to the City and to New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs. Thank you for all that you've done, and continue to do, as staff members of DHS."

Human Resources Administration's Multi-pronged Response to Meet Clients' Needs before and after Hurricane Sandy

Beginning a few days before Hurricane Sandy, the Human Resources Administration (HRA) played a critical role in disaster relief efforts. HRA staff informed clients living in Zone A and the Rockaways of temporary housing options and visited clients at home as necessary to ensure their safety. More than 300,000 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program households automatically received funding to replace food lost in the storm and an additional 100,000 more filed for additional benefits. In December the City implemented the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) to provide a one-month benefit to eligible families. In addition to providing direct aid, the Agency adjusted internal policies and worked with other government agencies to make getting help as easy as possible for those in need. Below are some examples of how HRA prioritized customer service throughout this difficult time:

HRA's Office of Legal Affairs routinely represents HRA's Adult Protective Services (APS) on legal matters to protect at-risk APS clients. Throughout storm recovery, HRA has worked with court officials citywide to secure adjournments for legal actions involving APS clients, protecting them from risks faced in their communities.

HRA provides income supports like Cash Assistance to help low-income families achieve self-sufficiency. To qualify, each household must participate in work or work-preparation activities. HRA excused client absences for many of these activities in the short period directly following the storm.

HRA worked to secure a federal waiver to allow people to purchase hot/prepared food with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits to assist those who lost cooking ability; that waiver has been extended twice through January 2013.

Finally, many households received benefits set to expire in the month following Hurricane Sandy. HRA automatically extended Medicaid coverage for consumers with cases due to expire in November and December, and the agency extended the application period to renew expiring Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and cash assistance benefits.

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