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**CITY MARKS FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF EAST HARLEM EXPLOSION AND BUILDING COLLAPSE**

**NEW YORK**—Today marks the first anniversary of the tragic East Harlem explosion, in which eight lives were lost and a total of 106 households and seven buildings were impacted. Mayor de Blasio will attend a memorial service with East Harlem/El Barrio residents hosted by Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito to commemorate the lives lost in the tragedy. First Lady Chirlane McCray, Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, and the Mayor’s Fund are visiting Safe Horizon’s Northern Manhattan office to recognize Safe Horizon, Union Settlement and LSA Family Services – organizations that were central to the recovery effort.

“Today, we honor the New Yorkers who lost their lives in this tragic incident,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “In the aftermath of the explosion, New Yorkers once again demonstrated that in a time of crisis, we come together to lift each other up. From rental assistance to mental health counseling to clothing donations, the outpour of support to ensure affected residents made a rapid recovery is a true testament to the compassion of New Yorkers.”

“In the one year anniversary of the explosion in East Harlem, let us remember those we lost and recommit ourselves to looking out for our neighbors, in good times and bad,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray, Chair of the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City**. “East Harlem has done a remarkable job rebuilding, in every sense of the word. But there is still work to be done, and we remain by their side.”

“Those we lost that tragic day were mothers and daughters, they were musicians and students, they were security and health professionals and they were our neighbors. As we remember them, we also continue to look out and care for their families and for those who were injured by the explosion. We stand with you and we will never forget,” said **Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**.

The incident went to a 5th Alarm response that day, meaning that more than 60 units comprised of more than 200 FDNY Firefighters, EMTs and paramedics responded. FDNY operated at the site for days as the search for victims continued.

The City, in partnership with Speaker Mark-Viverito, assisted the displaced families from the two buildings that were destroyed, and all but one has relocated. The City continues to work with the remaining household to help them locate permanent housing options. In the aftermath of the explosion, the Mayor’s Fund offered rental-related assistance to families in the two destroyed buildings and helped provide short-term housing assistance to 7 families through units provided and paid for by REBNY.

Immediately following the tragedy, the Mayor’s Fund and Speaker Mark-Viverito’s office mobilized services to help those in need - including the funding and administration of a victims assistance fund, on-going case management for residents in the buildings directly impacted, and mental health counseling to support local residents effected by the event. The Mayor’s Fund provided support to 98 percent of those touched by this tragedy – raising more than \$420,000, of which \$270,000 was distributed directly in aid to victims.

Additionally, with the support of local elected officials like City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and the Red Cross of Greater New York, the Fund helped secure an additional \$15,000 in clothing gift cards and 100 air purifiers, which also went directly to victims. Further support services were provided by local partners including Safe Horizon, LSA Family Health Services, and Union Settlement. The Mayor's Fund received over 600 donations from everyday New Yorkers as well as major support from the City's private sector including: Association for a Better New York and the Rudin Family, Con Edison, East Harlem Tutorial Program, Real Estate Board of New York, UJA-Federation of New York, Mount Sinai Health System, founders of Governors Ball Music Festival, New York State Association for Affordable Housing; and valuable in kind contributions from: Rainbow Shops.

## **LOCAL BUSINESSES**

There were 60 impacted ground level establishments, more than 90 percent have re-opened, and the Department of Small Business Services continues to work and provide assistance to the impacted East Harlem businesses.

Following the explosion, the Department of Small Business Services and Speaker Mark-Viverito's office issued bilingual recovery and assistance information to Community Board 11, distributed information to impacted properties, and went door-to-door on multiple visits to see how the City could help. SBS also worked with the US Small Business Administration and NYC Emergency Management, to qualify the area impacted as a declared disaster area, which would make impacted businesses eligible for access to low-cost SBA disaster loans.

Ongoing services include one-on-one personal assistance with client managers to guide through the recovery process, assistance with insurance matters, help accessing documentation to show loss/damages for insurance, and connections to financing assistance.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

Last Spring, the de Blasio administration brought together city agencies and the utility companies (Con Edison and National Grid) to review the city's emergency response to under-street conditions and coordination of underground infrastructure improvements.

Additionally, the administration accelerated infrastructure improvement and the Department of Environmental Protection received an additional \$300 million in funding from the City for fiscal years 2016 to 2018 to replace the oldest water and sewer infrastructure over the next 10 years. DEP, Con Edison, and National Grid are working together to coordinate water and gas infrastructure investments with a first wave of 10 sites across the five boroughs selected based on overlapping priorities, and are additionally identifying opportunities to use a joint bidding contracting structure to reduce costs and expedite underground infrastructure projects in a coordinated fashion.

“In the wake of this disaster, the City of New York and its real estate, philanthropic, and community leaders responded with urgency and compassion to the immediate concerns of its citizens in their time of greatest need,” said **HPD Commissioner Vicki Been**. “Through the City's coordinated effort HPD was able to assist more than 100 families with temporary and permanent housing services, and address the damage at the affected properties to allow displaced tenants to return safely to their homes. I thank the Mayor and Speaker for their leadership, as well as our sister agencies and my team at HPD in the Demolition, Code Enforcement, Emergency Housing, and Homeless Rental Units for their work on behalf of the victims of this tragedy.”

“While it is with great sadness that we reflect on the lives lost one year ago, the response to this tragedy, both by emergency responders and through community support in the weeks and months following the event show the true strength and resiliency of New Yorkers,” said **Buildings Commissioner Rick Chandler**. “The Department encourages residents to always report any building conditions they believe to be unsafe for occupants.”

“One year ago, when a devastating explosion ripped through the East Harlem community, FDNY members quickly responded to fight the raging fire, search for survivors and treat the dozens of injured residents,” said **Fire Commissioner Daniel A. Nigro**. “Since that terrible day, the Department has worked diligently to reinforce the critical safety message to all New Yorkers that if they smell an odor of gas, they should call 911 immediately.”

“Immediately after the tragic explosion in East Harlem last year, the Small Business Services Emergency Response Unit was at the site providing assistance to the neighborhood's local businesses,” said **Maria Torres-Springer, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services**. “One year later, more than 90 percent of the impacted businesses have re-opened, and I encourage New Yorkers to shop at and support these East Harlem businesses who stand as proof of how truly resilient New York City's neighborhoods and local businesses can be in the wake of a crisis.”

“As our Manhattan communities come together to commemorate this tragedy, we also remember New Yorkers' tremendous generosity and sense of community in response to it,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “Compassion and community in the face of adversity are our values as New Yorkers -- we help each other.”

“Today we honor the eight lives lost, the dozens injured, and the countless friends and family members forever impacted by this tragedy. One year later, the loss still present in our minds, we search for lessons to provide strength. In coordination with Mayor de Blasio, First Lady Chirlane McCray, and Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and the active support of our community, we continue to work towards a safer East Harlem,” said **Assembly Member Robert Rodriguez**.

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