

Update on city action and response to Hurricane Sandy

Written by Michael R. Bloomberg
Friday, 02 November 2012 15:03



I don't think it's any secret, but Sandy hit us very hard; it was a storm of historic intensity.

But New Yorkers are resilient and we have seen an enormous outpouring of support from people eager to volunteer, donate and help out.

We encourage people to register with NYC Service at www.facebook.com/nycservice, and we'll be identifying opportunities for volunteers in the coming days.

And we've received calls of support from people and leaders all over the world — including from the President and senior members of his staff.

We have a plan for recovery, and that recovery is already beginning I'm happy to say.

It's the beginning of a process that we all know will take a while, but this is the end of the downside, and hopefully from here it is going up.

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I surveyed from the air the parts of the city hit hardest by Hurricane Sandy with Sen. Chuck Schumer and Council Speaker Christine Quinn.

We saw the Rockaways, Lower Manhattan, the South Shore of Staten Island, Coney Island, Brighton Beach and Howard Beach.

That really did provide a clear look at how extensive the damage from the storm was.

It also showed the progress we're already making in our recovery.

On the Rockaway Peninsula I walked through the part of Breezy Point that was absolutely devastated by the wind-fed, fast-moving fires that took out more than 80 homes.

To describe it as looking like pictures we've seen at the end of World War II is not overstating it.

The area was completely leveled.

Chimneys and foundations were all that was left of many of those houses.

I actually ran in to Congressman Bob Turner and other Breezy Point homeowners and talked with them.

It's very sad they lost their homes, but the good news: there were no fatalities, thank God.

Unfortunately, all together so far in this storm, other places put together we've had 18 fatalities citywide as a result of this storm.

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Restoring power and mass transit remain the two biggest challenges in the days ahead.

That recovery is a mammoth job.

I know everyone at Con Ed recognizes how urgent it is.

Our administration continues to work closely with Con Ed to ensure that all New Yorkers get power back as soon as humanly possible.

As to mass transit: Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan has been working on a plan with the MTA to provide limited bus service.

On routes that are operational, buses began running on a Saturday schedule, with free fares.

Unfortunately, at some point the MTA will start to charge again, but that's the way they pay the bills.

We are doing other things to make it easier to get around town.

That includes an order I signed allowing yellow cabs to pick up multiple passengers, and also allowing black cars and livery cabs to make street pick-ups.

We're encouraging this ride sharing.

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Taxis are operating on a normal fare schedule.

Fares for additional passengers are to be negotiated; the driver must quote those fares up-front.

We're suggesting that a charge of \$10 for any additional passenger is fair.

Livery and black car drivers must also quote fares up-front.

So thank you to Joe Lhota and the MTA for what they're doing, and to David Yassky at Taxi and Limousine Commission for the rules which will hopefully get more cabs on the street.

Business in New York City is getting back to normal, at least where there is electricity.

The New York Stock Exchange clearly made the right decision in staying closed Monday and Tuesday in the interest of safety.

Now it believes it's ready for normal operations.

Trading resumed Wednesday at 9:30 a.m.

The NYSE Euronext building and trading floor were not damaged and are fully operational.

We were also in touch with business leaders in all five boroughs: Chambers of commerce, representatives of the city's 67 business improvement districts, major commercial and residential property owners, and the Partnership for New York City.

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And we are all working together to help business get back to normal.

Let me bring you up to date on the other work that city employees, volunteers and private sector workers are doing to speed New York's recovery.

I certainly can't say enough about the work of our first responders at the FDNY and NYPD.

Frontline workers in the Departments of Environmental Protection, Correction, Buildings, Sanitation and others have just done tremendous work.

And I want to commend the teachers and staff from the Department of Education, and all the other the city employees who are working in our shelters and taking care of their fellow New Yorkers.

Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs, Health Commissioner Tom Farley, and Homeless Services Commissioner Seth Diamond have done a spectacular job leading our efforts in health and human services.

There are an awful lot of people who are very vulnerable, and I think the city has done everything it possibly can to ease their concerns and make sure that they remain safe.

First, as to our hospitals:

We announced this morning, Coney Island Hospital is being evacuated. Patients are being discharged or moved to other health care facilities.

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All other public hospitals remain open.

Nearly 6,400 people remain in the city's 76 evacuation centers, and I want to thank the more than 2,900 people who are continuing to staff those centers.

Anyone affected by Sandy — homeowners, renters and businesses — can apply for federal disaster assistance.

If you want to do that, you register at DisasterAssistance.gov or call the Federal Emergency Management Agency at 1-800-621-3362.

That's 1-800-621-3362 for Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The Parks Department has received more than 7,000 reports of downed or damaged trees or tree limbs.

Winds are still high, trees are very water-logged from rain, more limbs and whole trees could come down, so I can't repeat two messages often enough: stay away from city parks.

They're closed until further notice.

And, report downed trees and tree limbs to 311 — not 911.

Please, 911 just has to remain free for making and receiving emergency calls about life-threatening issues.

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City sanitation crews will begin to resume curbside refuse pickup, as well as continue removing storm-blown debris from our streets.

However, there will be no recycling collection until further notice.

Inspectors for the Department of Buildings are inspecting the crane on West 57th Street and buildings throughout the city that may have been affected by the hurricane.