



NYS READY COMMISSION



NYS Respond COMMISSION



**NYS Ready & NYS Respond Commissions
Summary of Recommendations & Progress Update
October 28, 2013**

Dear Governor Cuomo,

On behalf of the 64 members of the NYS Ready Commission and the NYS Respond Commission, we are pleased to present you with the following summary of recommendations and progress update to help prepare and equip New York State for future weather-related disasters and other extreme natural events.

The scale of the damage from Superstorm Sandy far exceeded anything experienced in the region in recent history. The storm left six million cubic yards of debris, caused more than two million customers to lose power and forced 400,000 residents to evacuate. In the wake of the storm, emergency responders, public officials, healthcare workers, debris removal crews, faith communities, local volunteers and many others responded selflessly and with great courage – and tens of thousands of New Yorkers rallied to meet the needs of their neighbors and complete strangers alike.

Like so many New Yorkers, we were awed by the devastation that Superstorm Sandy created and by the way it tested the structures, networks and systems that we rely on – from the electric grid to the gas pump, from healthcare facilities to cherished homes, from mobile phones to emergency services. We know that we will face similar challenges in the future and must learn from this event.

As the climate continues to change, New York is likely to experience even more – or more extreme – major weather events and disasters. If there is one lesson to learn from Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene, Tropical Storm Lee and the 2010 blizzard, it is that the concept of a “100-year storm” has lost its meaning. We applaud the State for convening these Commissions to ensure that we are even better prepared for ever-more-frequent natural disasters and other emergencies.

As the Commissions addressed these important subjects, we found that an essential tenet of preparedness was the need for coordinated effort within and across all parties involved – including the healthcare, energy and communications sectors; State agencies, local and county governments and the federal government; and non-profit organizations, faith communities, the private sector and New York State residents themselves. Each has made good-faith, often heroic, efforts, and more formal clarification of responsibilities and planning will play an essential role in being even more prepared in the future.

This document is intended as a starting point in that crucial conversation – improving the strength and resilience of New York State’s emergency preparedness and response capabilities even as relief and recovery from Superstorm Sandy continues. We submit this update with the hope that the Commissions’ recommendations will help you continue to show how New York State is willing to take on the most difficult challenges and – by coming together – find real solutions that prepare us for a stronger future.

We are proud to have had the opportunity to serve New York State, and we – along with the members of both Commissions – stand ready to continue to work with you to turn these action-focused recommendations into policies and practices that will improve the safety and well-being of all New Yorkers for years to come.

Sincerely,

Ira Millstein & Irwin Redlener

Co-Chairs, NYS Ready Commission

Thad Allen & Brad Penuel

Co-Chairs, NYS Respond Commission

Letter from the Co-Chairs

October 28, 2013



Members of the NYS Ready Commission

Ira Millstein

Senior Partner, Weil, Gotshal and Manges LLP (Co-Chair)

Irwin Redlener

Director, National Center for Disaster Preparedness
at Columbia University (Co-Chair)

William Acker

Executive Director, NY-BEST

Scott Amrhein

President, Continuing Care Leadership Coalition

Robert Atkinson

Director of Policy Research, Columbia Institute
for Tele-Information at Columbia University

Guruduth Banavar

Vice President and Chief Technology Officer, Global Public Sector, IBM

Donald Capoccia

Managing Principal and Founder, BFC Partners, and President,
NYS Association for Affordable Housing

Mae Carpenter

Commissioner, Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services

Gerry Cauley

President and CEO, North American Electric Reliability Corporation

Mary Ann Christopher

President and CEO, Visiting Nurse Service of New York

Assembly Member Steven Englebright

Chair, Governmental Operations Committee

Arthur V. Gorman, Jr.

Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)

Patricia A. Hoffman

Assistant Secretary of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability,
U.S. Department of Energy (Advisory Member)

William Hooke

Senior Policy Fellow and Director, American Meteorological Society

John Kemp

President and CEO, The Viscardi Center

Katherine Kennedy

Clean Energy Counsel, Natural Resources Defense Council

Steven Levy

Managing Director, Sprague Operating Resources LLC

Robert Mayer

Vice President of Industry and State Affairs, US Telecom Association

***SEMO meeting after
Superstorm Sandy***



Source: DHSES

Daniel McCartan

Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Western New York Regional Resource Center and Erie County Medical Center

John Merklinger

9-1-1 Coordinator, Monroe County, and President, New York State 9-1-1 Coordinators Association

Cynthia Morrow

Commissioner of Health, Onondaga County

Major General Patrick A. Murphy

Adjutant General of New York State (Advisory Member)

Kyle Olson

Founder, The Olson Group

Walter Parkes, Chairman, O'Connell Electric Company, Inc.

Cynthia Rosenzweig

Senior Research Scientist, NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies and Columbia University Earth Institute

Howard Schmidt

Former Special Assistant to the President and Cybersecurity Coordinator

Denise Scott

Managing Director, LISC

D. Gregory Scott

Senior Vice President, Terminal Operations and Petroleum Distribution, Gulf Oil

S. Shyam Sunder

Director, Engineering Laboratory, National Institute of Standards and Technology

Major General (Retired) Joseph J. Taluto

Former Adjutant General, New York State

Anthony Townsend

Associate Research Scientist, Rudin Center for Transportation Policy and Management, New York University

Russell Unger

Executive Director, Urban Green Council

Susan C. Waltman

Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Greater New York Hospital Association

William "Bill" Wilson

President and CEO, Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company of New York

John E. Zuccotti

Co-Chairman, Brookfield Office Properties

***Superstorm Sandy
surf striking near the
Verrazano Bridge***



Source: Office of Governor Cuomo

Members of the NYS Respond Commission

*NYPA crews working
on electric service
restoration*



Source: New York Power Authority (NYPA)

Thad W. Allen

Senior Vice President, Booz Allen Hamilton; Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired) (Co-Chair)

K. Bradley Penuel

Director, Center for Catastrophe Preparedness and Response at New York University (Co-Chair)

Michael Balboni

President and Managing Director, RedLand Strategies

Doug Barton

Director of Planning and Economic Development, Tioga County

Patricia Bashaw

EMS Coordinator, Essex County

Bradford Berk

Senior Vice President for Health Sciences & CEO of the University of Rochester Medical Center

LaRay Brown

Senior Vice President, Corporate Planning, Community Health and Intergovernmental Relations, NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation

Major General Doug Burnett, Florida National Guard (Ret.)

James Burns, President, Firemen's Association of the State of New York

The Reverend Frederick Davie

Executive Vice President, Union Theological Seminary in New York City

Peter J. Davoren

President and Chief Executive Officer, Turner Construction

Grant Dillon

President, Global Preparedness and Mitigation

Eli Feldman

President and CEO, MJHS and Elderplan

Peter Gudaitis

President, National Disaster Interfaiths Network

Tony Hannigan

Executive Director, Center for Urban Community Services (CUCS)

Commissioner Jerome Hauer

New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (Advisory Member)

Assembly Member Carl Heastie, Chair, Cities Committee

Scott Heller, Director of Emergency Management, Albany Medical Center

Tino Hernandez

President and Chief Executive Officer, Samaritan Village, Inc.



Source: Office of Governor Cuomo

***National Guard
helicopters flying
over Manhattan***

Bart Johnson
Executive Director, International Association of Chiefs of Police

Timothy Manning
Deputy Administrator for Protection and National Preparedness,
FEMA (Advisory Member)

Mike McManus
President, New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association

Thomas Mungeer
President, New York State Troopers Police Benevolent Association

Chris Renschler
Associate Professor of Geography, University at Buffalo

Marilyn Saviola
Vice President, Advocacy and the Women's Health Access Program,
Independence Care System

Jennifer Schneider
Professor & Russell C. McCarthy Endowed Chair, Civil Engineering
Technology, Environmental Management & Safety Department,
Rochester Institute of Technology

Mark J. Solazzo
Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer,
North Shore-LIJ Health System

Harry L. Weed, II
Superintendent of Public Works, Village of Rockville Centre

Sheena Wright
President, United Way of New York City

***Major debris
over roadways in
Rockland County***



Source: Office of Governor Cuomo

Summary of Recommendations & Progress Update

Three of the most destructive storms in the history of the American Northeast – events with the probability of happening once in a century – have struck New York State in just the past three years. Superstorm Sandy, and before it Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee, have devastated entire communities, costing human lives, putting our most vulnerable residents in harm’s way, washing away homes and businesses, and causing tens of billions of dollars in damage.

As the climate continues to change, New York is likely to experience even more – or more extreme – acute and sustained natural extreme events and disasters, including coastal and riverine flooding, heat waves and seasonal droughts. Intense hurricanes may become more prevalent.

And we *must* be prepared.

On November 15, 2012, Governor Andrew Cuomo convened two commissions to address the crucial challenges of preparedness and response: the NYS Ready Commission and the NYS Respond Commission.

Governor Cuomo empaneled the **NYS Ready Commission** to draw on Superstorm Sandy as well as other recent experiences to examine how our networks, systems and structures should be prepared to withstand a major weather event. The Commission’s work recognizes the interconnected sectors essential to effective preparedness – from the State and local emergency response apparatus to the healthcare and social services network; from energy to telecommunications; from the resilience of our homes and businesses to the need for robust information systems. Across all of these areas, the Commission identified three overarching themes to guide the State in preparing for the future:

1. **Information** – the key role of reliable and timely data, including information about climate change, that are shared across sectors.
2. **Inter-connectedness** – the need to break down silos between and within sectors in order to put the public first and meet their needs, from healthcare to transportation to electricity and communication.
3. **Informed decision-making** – the importance of transparency and clarity in how and where critical decisions are made and the delineation of roles between various levels of government and outside partners.

In addition, a common hallmark of these themes and an essential tenet of preparedness is the importance of communication and coordination – within and across levels of government; between the State’s residents and their government and service providers; and among the public sector, private sector and non-profit and faith community partners.

The **NYS Respond Commission** was established simultaneously in order to ensure the state’s ability and capacity to effectively respond to future natural disasters. To create a context for understanding the cross-cutting role that key sectors and services play in response to an emergency, the Commission

Extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and impact. Responding to this “new normal” requires:

- Access to reliable and timely data.
- State-of-the-art training and preparation.
- Coordination within and across all sectors.
- Resilient systems to ensure that critical needs like fuel and communication can be met after an emergency.
- Particular focus on the most vulnerable populations.

Debris removal trucks lined up in Staten Island

Source: Office of Governor Cuomo



identified six universal demands and challenges created by extreme events that cause widespread disasters:

1. **Scale:** The ability to scale capabilities and capacity across geographies – from healthcare to sanitation – to meet demands that exceed normal service levels. Extraordinary demand can be met through a combination of organic capability and access to resources through pre-existing agreements (known as mutual aid), contingency contracts, public participation and private-sector resources.
2. **Knowledge management:** The ability to know and understand the situation, consequences, and demand for services. Knowledge management points to the need for centralized repositories of critical information and the development of a common operating picture to support rapid decision-making, prioritize service demands, assign resources and communicate with the public.
3. **Access:** The ability to establish a physical path for resource delivery and lines of communications before, during and after an extreme event. The importance of access underscores the inter-connected nature of responding to an emergency and the need for coordination across sectors.
4. **Supply chain establishment and management:** The ability to create multiple paths for resources, prioritize those resources and adapt to changing environments.
5. **Transition doctrine:** The ability to sense and act to move to higher levels of authority, access non-organic resources, and understand the associated legal, policy, regulatory, and compliance issues involved. This emphasizes the importance of clear understanding of intent and outcomes associated with response, immediate recovery and long-term recovery.
6. **Continuity of government:** The ability to retain and execute governmental responsibility.

Debris removal after Superstorm Sandy



Source: DHSES

The work of these two Commissions complemented one another and in many instances led to similar conclusions, and the summary of their recommendations is presented in a single comprehensive document in order to emphasize the inter-connected nature of preparedness and response. In addition, the recommendations put forward by the NYS Ready and NYS Respond Commissions should be seen as addressing part of a broader set of interwoven challenges in concert with the NYS 2100 Commission (focusing on long-term infrastructure resilience) and the Moreland Commission on Utility Storm Preparation and Response.

In making the recommendations that follow, the Commissions acknowledge that in many ways, the response to Superstorm Sandy is still unfolding. It will therefore take additional time for a complete study of the storm's lessons. This report is intended to further that crucial conversation – spurring needed action for preparedness even as relief and recovery from Superstorm Sandy continues. In this way, the Commissions functioned as an assembly of subject-matter experts, rather than as a fact-finding body.

While outside the scope of their charge, the Commissions also recognize that extreme weather events will increase in frequency and impact, including in New York State, unless more robust actions to mitigate and curb global warming emissions are taken at all levels of government. New York State is a leader in fighting to curb global warming pollution and should continue to build upon and expand these efforts, as Governor Cuomo has done.

Among the Commissions' major recommendations:

Organize and coordinate preparedness, response and recovery: Understand lines of authority, responsibility and accountability, and ensure access to quality timely data, including information about climate change, to inform decision-making

- Create a statewide network of unified emergency training, coordination, protocols, and communication. While all disasters are local, it is equally important to recognize that effective response is often regional – and sometimes even statewide or interstate.
- Ensure adequate supplies of equipment, fuel, food, water, critical personnel and other resources, and rapidly deploy them to key locations. The State should establish an Emergency Stockpile of essential and difficult-to-acquire goods. In addition, the State should establish standby contracts in advance that provide for just-in-time delivery during disasters.
- Deploy skilled personnel for emergency response to accelerate relief and recovery, including by ensuring appropriate training, credentialing and access for emergency responders as well as critical civilian workers.

Donated food and drink awaiting delivery after Superstorm Sandy



Source: Office of Governor Cuomo

Mobile cell phone charging station in Long Beach after Superstorm Sandy



Source: DHSES

- Leverage the powerful capacity of faith-based organizations, community groups and other non-profit organizations, which play a critical role in immediate disaster response and later recovery efforts and provide crucial support to first responders.
- Ensure effective coordination across sectors, including prioritizing power restoration to critical sectors (e.g., healthcare, fuel and communication) and populations, and mobilizing the private sector to assist in an emergency.
- Recognize the public's role as the first line of emergency preparedness and response by ensuring ongoing public education and engagement to encourage preparedness for extreme events and potential disasters before they occur.
- Develop and implement a Resilient Information System that provides a common operational picture to decision-makers at all levels in real time. This system should integrate data from many sources – public, private, non-profit – to provide accurate facts for planning, risk reduction, response and recovery efforts. It should also incorporate high-resolution weather and climate forecasting, risk, vulnerability and damage assessment, a critical asset management system, logistics optimization and informational command and control capability.

Improve the resilience of the electricity and fuel networks

Protect our fuel network from the pipeline to the pump.

- Prevent power loss along the fuel distribution supply chain by ensuring that gas stations in strategic locations – along with other critical fuel network assets – have back-up power capacity. In addition, the State should establish a Strategic Gasoline Reserve to avoid disruption in supply and deploy extra fuel supply for critical response personnel.

Make power outages less likely and, when they do happen, restore power more quickly.

- Require utilities to make critical improvements and revise standards to protect essential substation and generation facility equipment in the most vulnerable locations and require them to incorporate resiliency measures into their short- and long-term capital planning, as well as to update these efforts on a timely basis. The State should enhance its oversight of and require improvements in mutual aid arrangements among utilities within and outside the State, and ensure that utilities adequately plan for an influx of workers and equipment to support relief and recovery by providing housing, fuel, storage and logistics support in the most efficient manner possible.
- Encourage the creation of “power islands” to maintain power during widescale and sustained outages at critical infrastructure sites and where people can seek refuge. The State should identify opportunities to facilitate installation of distributed generation, energy storage and micro-grids at these locations – encouraging technologies that can provide peak load reduction in addition to back-up power, with a focus on clean and lowcarbon technologies.

Maintain our ability to communicate and ensure effective public communication

- Provide reliable and timely information from government to the public – and from the public to government – using redundant communication platforms and technologies including broadcast media, wired and mobile phones, tablets and other smart devices, social networking, computers and nonelectronic means. As one important strategy, the State should create NY-TEXT, a location-specific text message service to communicate quickly with those in effected areas.
- Improve the resilience of the communication network for survival and rapid repair. The State’s Disaster Preparedness Commission should convene the wireless industry and other experts to ensure that wireless carriers have appropriate plans in place to pre-position and deploy mobile cellular towers and other assets immediately after an emergency if needed.
- Prevent communication system failure. The State should identify the most critical assets for protection, including strengthening the capacity of the backhaul (the physical network necessary for both wired and wireless calls) to withstand severe weather events, and should ensure that cell towers have adequate on-site back-up power. In addition, the State should explore a voluntary certification for wireless carriers and other communication providers that meet New York State resiliency standards.

Protect vulnerable populations and make the healthcare system more resilient

- Ensure that decisions to evacuate or shelter in place are made with absolute clarity and based on the best information about facility resilience, and include strong patient protection. The State should re-evaluate the criteria for a healthcare facility to be able to shelter in place based on the lessons-learned from Superstorm Sandy and other events. When evacuation occurs, the State should ensure clear protocols for patient and resident tracking and family notification.
- Address the needs of vulnerable populations in their homes and communities, including by ensuring that local government emergency response plans include effective provisions to address the needs of low-income and other vulnerable populations, including addressing food, transportation and other essential services, and addressing the unique needs of special populations, such as through enhanced translation services.
- Improve the resiliency of healthcare facilities to protect patients and increase the ability to shelter in place when appropriate. The State should ensure that key healthcare facilities in vulnerable locations have back-up power capacity – including at least dialysis facilities and adult care facilities – and that essential building components be resistant to flooding and other damage.

Destruction resulting from Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee



Source: NYS DEC

Clothing distribution center after Superstorm Sandy



Source: Office of Governor Cuomo

Hurricane Irene road damage in Catskills



Source: Office of Governor Cuomo

Emergency fueling



Source: Office of Governor Cuomo

- Ensure an overall state of readiness through robust preparation and evaluation. The State should ensure that healthcare facilities and agencies have planned and trained for an emergency. This includes creating backup supply chains for food, medicine and supplies that support healthcare networks.

Improve the resiliency of homes and other structures

- Update the New York State Building Code to adopt requirements for smarter, resilient building performance for new construction, utilizing up-to-date climate observations and projections.
- Become the first state in the nation to implement a voluntary “ENERGY STAR®”-like program focused on resilience for residential, commercial and industrial structures that meet standards for being able to better withstand, adapt to and rapidly recover from disruption, even while improving efficiency and reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

The Commissions have prioritized several of their key recommendations, with the understanding that many of the above items will require significant study and planning.

Progress of Key Preliminary Recommendations

In January, the NYS Ready and NYS Respond Commissions issued preliminary recommendations to Governor Cuomo to assist in the preparation of the 2013 State of the State agenda and the Executive Budget. Many of the initial recommendations were immediately adopted by the Governor, and the Commissions are pleased to report significant progress on a number of these critical first-stage initiatives:

Recommendation 1:

The Commissions recommended that the State create a Statewide network of unified emergency training, coordination, protocols and communication.

The Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Services has established 10 Emergency Response Zones across the State focused on regional preparedness and coordination of emergency managers, local officials and first responders. Each Zone has a Regional Director and a Regional Coordinator, and a New York State Police Lieutenant is assigned to each Zone to work with the Office of Emergency Management staff. When not involved in incident response activities, these leaders participate in planning, assessments and exercises.

Recommendation 2:

The Commissions recommended that the State ensure that emergency response personnel receive state-of-the-art training.

Governor Cuomo is establishing the first-ever Statewide program designed to establish uniform emergency preparedness training for county chief executives, county emergency managers and local emergency first responders including fire chiefs, police chiefs, EMS directors and other county officials

that would likely play a significant role in disaster response. The NYS Emergency Management Certification and Training Program (NYS-EMC) will certify participants for disaster response capabilities in counties statewide.

NYS-EMC will provide training for three tiers of participants. Tier 1 is a one-day training session for county chief executives, Tier 2 is a four and a half day training session for county emergency managers and Tier 3 is a two-day training session for local emergency first response agency chiefs. Tier 1 and Tier 2 participants will also engage in an annual one-day updated training session. Training and certification for County Executives and Emergency Managers will be required for grant submission eligibility for any Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Services-administered grant.

In addition, the State has significantly increased training for state, county and local officials and first responders, including a nearly 500% increase over the last year in the number of people trained at the State Preparedness Training Center at Oriskany.

Recommendation 3:

The Commissions recommended that the State establish an “Emergency Stockpile” of essential supplies and equipment.

The State has established nine regional stockpiles with critical equipment and life-saving supplies for rapid deployment. The stockpiles are located throughout the state to ensure access regardless of the scale, location or type of severe weather event or other emergency. The stockpile system includes generators, water pumps, light towers, water, food (MREs), cots, pillows, blankets, chainsaws, sandbags and other supplies and equipment.

Recommendation 4:

The Commissions recommended that the State provide additional specialized training for the National Guard to even further expand their emergency response capability, with a particular focus on expediting power restoration.

The State is now ready to deploy hundreds of National Guard members trained to provide security, logistics, transportation and communications support to help rapidly restore power after an emergency. Up to 32 modular and expandable teams of National Guard members can be deployed to help expedite power restoration. National Guard members who are selected for these teams will receive just-in-time training on line safety and equipment hazards to prepare them for the role. The National Guard has worked with the state’s major utilities to coordinate and plan for the deployment of these specialized teams. Key National Guard roles would be in security, logistics, transportation, and communication support to maximize the ability of utility linemen to rapidly repair damage and restore power.

Recommendation 5:

The Commissions recommended that the State require that gas stations in strategic locations have on-site back-up power capacity.

Following the Commissions’ recommendation, Governor Cuomo proposed and New York State has enacted the nation’s strongest gas station back-up power

Environmental conservation officers going door-to-door on Long Island



Source: Office of Governor Cuomo

**National Guard
distributing goods
to residents after
Superstorm Sandy**



Source: Office of Governor Cuomo

law to ensure that all gas stations in critical downstate locations have power after an emergency.

Every downstate gas station (in New York City, Long Island, Westchester County and Rockland County) within a half-mile of a highway exit or a hurricane evacuation route will be required to have a transfer switch (which makes it possible to hook up a generator) and to deploy a generator within 24 hours of losing power during an energy or fuel supply emergency. Stations have until April 1, 2014, to comply.

In addition, 30 percent of major chain gas stations further away from highway exits and evacuation routes will be required to have a transfer switch and to deploy a generator within 48 hours of losing power during an energy or fuel supply emergency downstate. The stations have until August 1, 2015, to comply.

The State has launched a grant program through the New York State Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA) to help stations meet the requirements, providing grants of up to \$10,000 for the installation of a transfer switch or up to \$13,000 for the installation of both a transfer switch and a permanently affixed generator.

In addition, as of April 1, 2014, all newly constructed downstate gas stations or gas stations that are torn down and rebuilt will also be required to have a transfer switch or back-up generator installed.

Recommendation 6:

The Commissions recommended that the State create a “Strategic Gasoline Reserve” as a back-up to further protect New York State from temporary disruptions in fuel supply.

The State has announced that it is establishing the country’s first State Strategic Gasoline Reserve to help avoid shortages for first responders and New York families. The Strategic Gasoline Reserve will begin with a pilot program on Long Island with 3 million gallons of fuel.

As determined by the fuel emergency situation, gasoline from the Reserve will be released to meet fuel needs while the industry recovers from a disruption in routine operations. While the Reserve was designed as a pilot for Long Island, this reserve could be delivered to other parts of the state as needed. In all emergency scenarios, the Reserve will only be used as a supplement to market deliveries, in order to maintain adequate levels of fuels during an emergency recovery. The selection of the Reserve location was chosen through a competitive solicitation.

Recommendation 7:

The Commissions recommended that the State establish an online one-stop shop for disaster response.

The State has launched StormRecovery.NY.gov to direct New Yorkers to all assistance. In addition, New York State has continued to pioneer ways to use social media and mapping to provide up-to-date information on emergency recovery resources.

Recommendation 8:

The Commissions recommended that the State create NY-TEXT: a location-specific way to communicate with New York residents in an emergency.

The FCC and FEMA have approved New York’s request to use the federal Wireless Emergency Alert system when the State needs to send location-specific information to New Yorkers before, during or after an emergency.

Wireless Emergency Alerts appear like text messages and are accompanied by a sound and vibration. Messages could include directions to evacuate, the location of a nearby food station or local shelter, information about local power restoration, or other location-specific information that New Yorkers would need in an emergency.

The system allows the state to localize messages by sending the alert to everyone in the range of the specific cell towers that we choose – for example, an entire county, or a specific city or village, or even a large neighborhood.

Newer cell phones already have the capability to receive these alerts. It is estimated that within a year, the significant majority of New Yorkers will have phones that can receive Wireless Emergency Alerts.

This strategy will complement the other elements of the NY Alert system, which enables New Yorkers to sign up to receive emergency messages by text message, email, phone or through the state’s NY Alert mobile app.

Recommendation 9:

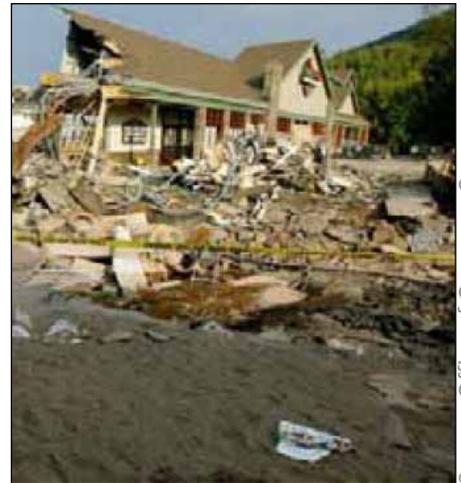
The Commissions recommended that the State ensure that first responders, outreach workers, and healthcare and human services personnel are prepared to serve vulnerable populations who need assistance.

First, the NYS Department of Health is assessing healthcare facilities to evaluate their ability to shelter in place or evacuate in an emergency. This ensures that decision-makers have accurate and complete data when a determination needs to be made about whether a particular facility will need to evacuate in a specific emergency situation.

Second, the state has trained hospitals, nursing homes, adult care facilities, local health departments and local emergency management officials on updated evacuation procedures. Training has been completed in the most vulnerable locations and is underway statewide.

Third, New York State has launched and deployed NYS e-FINDS, a statewide emergency tracking system to ensure the safety of patients and residents when healthcare and human services facilities evacuate.

Destroyed business in Margaretville after Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee



Source: Office of Governor Cuomo

Flooding at Battery Tunnel Entrance



Source: Office of Governor Cuomo

Power equipment arriving by USAF plane from California at Stewart Air National Base in Newburgh

Source: Office of Governor Cuomo



e-FINDS is a secure, confidential, fast and easy-to-use statewide solution that will provide real-time access to healthcare and human services patient and resident locations in an emergency. Patient and resident locations can be updated and tracked using wristbands and hand-held scanners, mobile apps, or paper tracking (if power and/or phones are out of service).

e-FINDS provides patient tracking to hospitals, nursing homes and adult care facilities overseen by the Department of Health; state developmental centers and many certified residential homes overseen by the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities; residential treatment programs overseen by the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services; state psychiatric facilities and licensed residential programs overseen by the Office of Mental Health; supportive housing overseen by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, and juvenile justice facilities operated by the Office of Children and Family Services.

Recommendation 10:

The Commissions recommend that the State consider location vulnerabilities when new construction or renovation of a healthcare facility is proposed.

The State has developed new requirements for greater resilience and back-up power for healthcare facilities that are built or renovated in vulnerable locations.

Any hospital, clinic (such as dialysis facilities) or nursing home located in the 500-year flood plain that has a new facility or major renovation project will need to comply with requirements for:

- installation of flood resistant emergency generators and fuel supplies;
- generators and fuel pumps that are always accessible;
- pre-connections in power systems;
- pre-connections for temporary boilers and chillers if primary equipment is located below design flood elevation; and
- HVAC for inpatient units to be operational during power utility outages by installing extra generator capacity.

These changes were adopted by the NYS Public Health and Health Planning Council and will be amended into regulation. Until the changes were adopted, the Council had implemented a temporary moratorium on new healthcare facility construction in these vulnerable locations.

Hurricane Irene storm damage in Middleburgh



Source: Office of Governor Cuomo



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