



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Hurricane Irene's Impact on the MTA

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Here's an update on the Hurricane Irene's impact to the MTA system and what we are doing to restore service. There are widespread impacts of the storm throughout our system, including flooding, down trees and power outages.

It is clear that the actions the MTA took before the storm to secure our equipment and make sure that our employees were safe before the hurricane hit were correct. The yards and depots from which we moved equipment are now underwater. Our actions prudently protected our assets and will help us to restore service.

We are actively assessing the storm's damage and we will begin restoration efforts as quickly as possible where we can safely do it. MTA Chairman Walder is in direct conversations with the Governor and the Mayor regarding the condition of our system and our efforts to restore service. NYPD and Suffolk County are providing helicopter support for this effort.

Right now we're looking at vastly different situations across the different parts of our transportation network.

On the subway system, the good news is that our worst fears about salt water flooding into the under-river tunnels did not come to fruition. However, there are clearly some impacts and the assessment process is extensive. We have people walking tracks throughout the underground portion of the system as we speak; we had to wait for wind gusts to die down before we could send employees onto elevated structures to walk those tracks and inspect those structures. And of course we need to get people and equipment in place before service can return to normal. For example, we have almost no trains positioned in Brooklyn right now.

On the LIRR, we have trees down and flooding in several areas. In addition, wind gusts on Long Island are expected to remain at 40-50 MPH through late afternoon and crews are dispatched when conditions are deemed safe. We are also waiting for winds to subside before beginning the process of untying hundreds of crossing gates that had been disabled so that they were not damaged by Irene's winds.

On Metro-North, we are experiencing major flooding at numerous locations on all lines. We're struggling with water that has risen over the rail, power outages and trees tangled in overhead catenary wires. We are only just beginning to assess the damage in this part of our territory. We are particularly concerned about the runoff that is occurring after the heavy rains, and expect additional flooding along streams and rivers that run across or alongside the right of way.

At Bridges and Tunnels all of our facilities are operating.

The Bus system is the first service which we expect to be able to restore. We moved our buses to higher ground and they are all in good shape. The challenge in restoring service will be getting bus operators into position and navigating around the flooded streets in many areas. To be clear, it will be a limited service, but you can expect to see buses running again before other MTA services come back online. We are also providing 20 buses to NYC OEM to help move evacuees back to NYC Housing Authority facilities.

In summary, the actions that the MTA took in preparation were the correct ones, and they've put us in the best possible position to restore service by protecting our equipment. I will update you further when I have more specifics