

Joint Legislative Public Hearings on 2012-2013 Executive Budget Proposal
Public Protection
Senate Finance
Assembly Ways and Means
January 30, 2012

Testimony of
Commissioner Jerome M. Hauer
New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services

Good morning Chairman DeFrancisco, Chairman Farrell and members of this joint hearing.

My name is Jerome Hauer, and I am the Commissioner of the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services.

It is my pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the Division's proposed 2012-2013 budget and some of the goals, challenges and way forward for the Division in the coming year.

Governor Cuomo outlined his central theme of *reimagining government* as a priority for the Executive Department. He is leading the State in an effort to create greater public value by getting back to the basics, eliminating unnecessary waste and streamlining our operations, so that we can better provide quality services for our customers. This means building upon our successes, correcting what doesn't work and continuing the momentum that has been achieved thus far.

The Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services is in a unique position in having converged homeland security and counter terrorism, emergency management, fire, cyber security and interoperable communications. After pulling all these disciplines together, we continue the process of synthesizing the common threads that run through the Division and concentrating our efforts to enhance our performance of those services.

As Commissioner, I am committed to ensuring that the Division fulfills its core mission and in doing so, each investment that we make must measurably serve to benefit our first responders, our citizens and our local governments.

Disasters, whether natural or man-made, will always begin and end at the local level. No one understands this more than those directly affected most recently by Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. More than 42,000 of our citizens – your constituents – sadly faced the loss of loved ones, their homes, and severe disruption to their lives. The current estimate of fiscal impact to the State may exceed \$1.5 billion. Some of the federal recovery assistance has started to flow into the state; however, the lasting consequences of these storms underscore the significance of maintaining razor sharp readiness and response capabilities. An honest assessment reveals that, while there were many successes, lessons can be learned and improvements can be made.

The State serves an active role in assisting localities to navigate efforts in planning, communications, readiness and recovery. New York has made a great deal of progress in the last decade since 9/11, but challenges remain. Despite all the efforts to date, disparities in local

readiness across the State continue to exist. We plan to enhance state and local pre-incident preparedness and post-disaster response coordination by investing in our regional offices and establishing regional rapid support teams. Another significant step towards strengthening statewide readiness capabilities includes the Intrastate Mutual Aid Program, or IMAP - which is one of our initiatives currently before this legislature - is a framework developed from the national Emergency Management Assistance Compact model. IMAP would serve to foster local disaster and emergency assistance by removing barriers such as the uncertainty as to how resources will be deployed and how costs will be apportioned.

In building upon this network approach, at the State-level we will be looking to better understand what assets are available for deployment. The old adage, "plan now or pay later" is certainly appropriate in emergency management and disaster mitigation. Knowing what we have and how we can - without undue delay - coordinate resources and get them where they are needed in disaster response and recovery operations is an exercise we must undertake in times of calm, not in the midst of chaos.

What will be potentially challenging this year is that nationally, we are facing a 44 percent cut in federal Homeland Security funding for 2012; this is *in addition to* the decrease in funding last year. I want to emphasize that at this moment, we are *uncertain of the precise impact of these cuts to New York*. We will know more in the near future when the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security will make decisions as to State-specific allocations. We will continue to urge the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to invest funding in New York, where threat remains the highest.

By way of State funding, in December I announced the first round of \$20 million in funding to sixteen counties in the State to improve first responder communications and help localities better respond to emergency situations. The only way we will improve upon our emergency response system is to invest in it - and invest *wisely*. This is just first step, we are committed to this endeavor. We anticipate initiating the next application process to allow competition for \$45 million in interoperable communications grants in the near future. I know interoperable communications is a top priority for each of you and your constituents.

In closing, the points I touch on here give a cursory overview of some of the priorities I envision for the Division moving forward. Our responsibilities are diverse and wide-ranging; however, the bottom-line is we are charged with ensuring safety and protection of the people we serve - whether it is from storms, flooding or terrorists armed with explosives.

I am eager to begin the process of molding a new conceptual framework for homeland security and emergency management in New York that is effective, adaptive and sustainable into the future.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.