

FY 2013/2014 Budget Testimony

NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services

February 6, 2013

Good morning Chairman DeFrancisco, Chairman Farrell and distinguished members of the Committees. I am Jerome Hauer, Commissioner of the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

It should be no surprise that the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2013-2014 focuses on strengthening the state's ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters. One hundred days ago, New York State experienced one of the most destructive storms to strike the Northeast in recorded history. While still recovering from Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee, the State was facing the arrival of Superstorm Sandy. As a result, over 60 percent of New York State's counties have or are currently undergoing efforts to recover from and rebuild after, what is sure to be two of the most costly natural disasters on record.

The combination of Sandy's path and size offered clear indication that we would be confronted with a storm of enormous impact. Immediately upon notice of the impending storm, Governor Cuomo ordered the Division of Homeland Security's Office of Emergency Management to begin preparation for Sandy's landfall. The Governor quickly declared a state of emergency, activated the State Emergency Operations Center in Albany, and initiated the coordination of the State's response activities, including storm tracking, coordination of staff deployments and operational support. In the days prior to the storm, over 2,500 state personnel from 23 agencies were deployed to pre-determined locations to assist in the preparation for the storm's arrival. The Governor also asked the President for an expedited major disaster declaration, and mobilized Army and Air National Guard assets.

Sandy would eventually barrel through the most densely populated areas of New York bringing high speed winds and torrential rains, record level waves and a storm surge of upwards of 13 feet. As we know, the impact was catastrophic. Immediately following the storm, the state provided nearly 3.5 million liters of water, more than 2.5 million ready-to-eat meals and over 100,000 blankets to those in need.

The needs of New Yorkers impacted by Sandy are ongoing. We are grateful for the recently approved federal aid package, which Governor Cuomo fought tirelessly to bring to our state. As such, you will notice just under \$13 billion in additional appropriation authority for the receipt and disbursement of federal aid to local governments. We will continue to work with the federal government to make these funds available to those in need as rapidly, efficiently and effectively as possible.

As Governor Cuomo has said, we are facing a "new normal" with 100-year storms occurring every two years. We must continue to make every effort to plan for the arrival of these severe

weather events, eliminate unnecessary risks and do our best to anticipate the eventual needs in the aftermath. Recent events suggest that New York will continue to face storms with increased frequency and greater intensity. One of the Governor's priorities is the focus on smarter building practices, mitigation plans and preparing ourselves for the new reality we face. Proceeding forward, the Governor has outlined some of the measures that will better prepare us for the next storm, with particular attention to coordination activities and the landscape of coastal communities - areas typically most vulnerable to hurricane and storm activity, the training and certification of all emergency management operations and broadening the avenues of information sharing with the public. As the Governor outlined in his State of the State address and budget message, we must also focus attention on increased involvement by our communities through the development of a reliable volunteer network, seeking out and understanding where our vulnerable populations are and the implementation of a citizen preparedness campaign that will not only better serve and prepare New Yorkers, but help to better guide them in the planning and recovery stages.

In the area of first responder preparedness and coordination, the Governor highlighted the need for the establishment of universal protocols for emergency response to improve on-time coordination and adaptability of our state and local emergency response professionals. We will be working with the State University of New York to develop a training program that will cover incident command, response, recovery, and state emergency protocols.

Public safety communications was a high priority during Sandy. Multiple National Interoperability channels were activated across the area and radio caches were deployed to ensure interagency coordination. In addition, all five of the Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications' radio communications vehicles, or STRs, were deployed to Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, Nassau County and Suffolk County. Public safety communications will continue to be a priority of the State as demonstrated by our recent announcement that DHSES will award a total of \$102 million in grants for interoperable communications to counties in the coming months. The 2013-2014 budget includes a \$75 million appropriation for additional grants. We look forward to continuing to build upon the groundwork accomplished thus far.

Last but not least, the Governor's priority to establish pre-positioned stockpiles of critical equipment and supplies is one of the fundamental preparedness efforts that can alleviate many of the logistical issues. We expect these to include assets such as power generators, water tankers, chainsaws, piping, light towers and pumps. These efforts are already under way, under the Governor's direction, as we have been working to acquire pre-positioned assets and are making progress toward establishing a comprehensive State Stockpile strategy.

The recovery from disasters will undoubtedly be challenging, but New York has always risen to the task. Make no mistake, the rebuilding of our homes, businesses and the State's critical infrastructure and utility services will take time. Exactly how long remains uncertain, but the 2013-2014 budget reinforces our commitment to easing the burdens on victims of these storms, expediting the state's recovery from them and better preparing for the next event.

This concludes my testimony and I am pleased to answer any questions you may have.