



**New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Public Protection
January 29, 2019**

Testimony

Good morning. Thank you Chairwoman Krueger, Chairwoman Weinstein, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee.

I am Terence O'Leary, the Executive Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the excellent work of the Division over the past year, as well as a few highlights from the Governor's public protection budget. It is an honor to share with you the accomplishments of the dedicated men and women of the Division, who are charged with a tremendous responsibility – protecting New Yorkers from natural and man-made disasters through prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.

The Executive Budget provides the resources needed to accomplish our mission and enhance public safety. Total agency appropriations are \$1.6 billion. Some notable items which the Division will be administering include \$25 million to continue the success of the Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes program and \$5 million of capital funding to expand the State Preparedness Training Center.

I would like to provide an overview of the work we performed in 2018. Emergency management and response remains a priority for the agency. In 2018, the State Emergency Operations Center was activated to a Level 4 or higher 38 separate times. These activations required coordinating multi-agency responses with other State agencies and localities. Additionally, our staff continues to support our local partners through direct partnerships, training and, when necessary, support in local Emergency Operations Center activations. In 2018, we provided counties and municipalities with staffing support for 48 emergency incidents.

Among these events were the high-axle vehicle rescue in Fort Covington, the building collapse in Poughkeepsie, and the Altona Flat Rock wild fire. During the August flooding in the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier, the State partnered with local and county first responders to help evacuate residents caught in the flooding. Staff from DHSES' Office of Fire Prevention and Control swift water rescue teams evacuated over 80 people from the shores of Seneca Lake that morning.



This event demonstrates the danger of flooding and underscores the need for high quality swift water training for both State and local first responders. Thanks to you, the State's Swift Water Flood Training facility is now operational at the State Preparedness Training Center (SPTC). This world class training facility provides specialized training opportunities for New York State responders that they would otherwise be unable to obtain. State and local first responders can now safely learn and practice the techniques necessary for fast moving water and urban flooding rescues. Despite just opening the facility in August, we have already trained 321 responders in 13 different water rescue courses. We plan an even more expansive training schedule for 2019.

The Division also launched another new training program at the SPTC – the Complex Coordinated Terrorist Attack program. This program works with upstate urban areas (specifically Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and the Capital Region) to enhance planning and response to complex and coordinated attacks. This year, we are coordinating a capstone exercise that will involve responders from multiple upstate urban areas.

The Executive Budget includes funding to further enhance the state-of-the-art training provided at the SPTC, using \$5 million of capital funding to create new training venues. With your partnership, we have made the SPTC a national model for first responder training, and the Governor's proposal will build upon that success.

The Division's counterterrorism efforts continue to expand and adapt to address the latest threats. For instance, last year the Division's Office of Counterterrorism increased the number of Red Team assessments across the state by conducting exercises at over 1,000 locations. More than 400 people representing over 100 federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies worked together to evaluate and enhance New York's counterterrorism posture. These efforts allow us to assess the effectiveness of suspicious activity reporting and strengthen the relationships between law enforcement, businesses, and the public. This year's Executive Budget proposes to further expand these efforts.

In addition, the Division partnered with federal, state and local law enforcement for operation NY-SECURE to conduct counterterrorism and incident response exercises along Amtrak routes and MTA commuter lines. The Division also looks forward to implementing the recommendations of the Governor's counterterrorism panel. These recommendations, announced earlier this month, will help make New York safer against evolving threats.

The Division continues to expand its role in protecting the State against cyber-attacks. The new Cyber Incident Response Team (CIRT) is now fully operational. In the past year, the CIRT provided incident response services to multiple counties and municipalities across the State. For



the 2018 election, the CIRT partnered with the State Board of Elections and ITS to secure the State's election infrastructure and serve as a go-to resource for County Boards of Election. The CIRT continues to work with the Critical Infrastructure Protection Unit to strengthen the Division's cyber assistance and enhance cybersecurity for New York State.

Our efforts to enhance the public's preparedness continue through the Governor's Citizen Preparedness Corps trainings. During 2018, with your assistance, we partnered with the National Guard and the Red Cross to train 62,722 New Yorkers. Since the program's inception, more than 277,000 New Yorkers have been trained in our all-hazards approach to prepare for and respond to emergency situations.

While it is not possible to cover all the great work of the Division during my testimony today, I hope that I have provided you with an overview of the Division's priorities for the next fiscal year.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

