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MAYOR BLOOMBERG LAUNCHES NOTIFY NYC

New Program Will Test Emergency Public Communication Systems in Four Pilot Areas

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg today announced the launch of Notify NYC, a pilot program to deliver emergency public information by email, text messages and reverse-911 alerts in four City community districts. Any interested individual can sign up for Notify NYC through www.nyc.gov and receive information about significant emergency events in four pilot communities: Lower Manhattan, the Northeast Bronx, the Rockaways, and Southwest Staten Island. The different technologies tested during the pilot will be evaluated to determine whether they could be deployed citywide. The pilots in Lower Manhattan and the Rockaways will test email and text message alerts, and the pilots for the Northeast Bronx and Southwest Staten Island will test email alerts and auto-dialing – also called reverse-911. Notify NYC, available at www.nyc.gov, began accepting email addresses and telephone numbers today. The launch of this program fulfills a campaign promise and the City will begin sending alerts on Monday, December 10.

“I have always believed that the public deserves the swiftest access to information its government can accurately provide during emergencies,” said Mayor Bloomberg. “Notify NYC will give New Yorkers in the pilot communities access to information while serving as a proving ground for different technologies that could one day benefit the entire City.”

Deputy Mayor Edward Skyler has overseen the development of Notify NYC, which is the result of a collaborative effort between the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), the Department of Information, Technology and Telecommunications (DOITT), the Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit (CAU) and the City’s public safety, health and housing agencies including Police (NYPD), Fire (FDNY), Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Environmental Protection (DEP), Sanitation (DSNY), Transportation (DOT), Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), and Buildings (DOB).

Information about significant emergency events in the four pilot communities will be sent via a differing combination of email, text messages with a maximum length of 120 characters and recorded telephone calls known as reverse-911. Alerts sent through Notify NYC will also be posted on the program’s website at www.nyc.gov and distributed to call takers at 311 and 911 in an effort to ensure that information that the City provides is accurate, timely and consistent.

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The pilot will test two types of messages: “alerts” that will provide time-sensitive information and instructions about an emergency and “notifications” that will serve as informational advisories. For example, a major coastal storm approaching the City could trigger a Notify NYC alert, while a utility outage that does not require any specific action could trigger a notification. Alerts and notifications will be drafted by OEM’s Watch Command and sent to registered Notify NYC participants.

Emergency information will be limited to events that directly impact the four communities in the pilot program, but anyone can sign up for the service, regardless of where they live or work. Notify NYC is a voluntary program and information collected to send alerts and notifications will remain confidential. Phone numbers, email addresses and other personal information collected during the registration process will never be used for purposes other than an emergency alert or notification transmitted through this program.

“I am pleased that the many meetings I have convened with Community Board 1, LMDC and OEM to discuss the development of an emergency community notification system have led to the pilot program announced today,” said Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver. “In the wake of 9/11, the Deutsche Bank fire and the flood at 90 West Street, an effective and reliable notification system is vitally needed to notify the Lower Manhattan community of potential emergencies.”

“Last year in my State of the City speech I spoke about the need for a new emergency response system that would get real time information directly to New Yorkers,” said Council Speaker Christine Quinn. “Today I am proud to join the Mayor in announcing the Notify NYC pilot which will begin to establish new ways to alert the public in the event of an emergency or local community problem.”

“During an emergency, timely and accurate information is important not only for emergency responders, but also for the public,” said OEM Commissioner Joseph F. Bruno. “We’re eager to examine new technology that might provide additional methods for communicating with New Yorkers about serious incidents in their communities.”

Lower Manhattan and the Rockaways

The pilots for Lower Manhattan and the Rockaways will distribute alerts and notifications through email and text messages. Because the Notify NYC messages travel on cellular carriers’ networks, message-delivery times will vary. Text messages will work on cell phones used by different wireless carriers.

Notify NYC for Lower Manhattan will serve neighborhoods in Manhattan Community Board 1: Battery Park City, Civic Center, Financial District and Tribeca. Lower Manhattan was chosen for the pilot program because of public concerns about health and safety issues associated with the 9/11 attacks, including the construction, deconstruction and decontamination activities near the World Trade Center site.

“Manhattan Community Board 1 has called for the adoption of a community notification plan which would allow for wide spread, up-to-the-minute dissemination of critical data,” said Community Board 1 Chair Julie Menin. “I am thrilled that the Mayor and the Administration have listened to our concerns and have devised a community notification program which will be piloted in our community.”

Notify NYC for the Rockaways will serve neighborhoods in Queens Community Board 14: Breezy Point, Belle Harbor, Neponsit, Arverne, Bayswater, Edgemere, Rockaway Park, Rockaway and Far Rockaway. These coastal communities in Rockaway and Far Rockaway were chosen because of the relative frequency of flood conditions and the threat of severe flooding and beach erosion from a coastal storm.

“An emergency notification program of this magnitude has never been tried before,” said Council Member Peter F. Vallone Jr., Chairman of the Public Safety Committee. “I commend the administration for taking on such a large but potentially life saving project. If successful, this service will provide vital information to New Yorkers, and an informed public is a safer public.”

Northeast Bronx and Southwest Staten Island

The pilots for Northeast Bronx and Southwest Staten Island will distribute alerts and notifications through email and auto-dialing, a service that delivers pre-recorded voice messages to landlines and cell phones and is also known as reverse-911. As part of the registration process, participants can elect to receive only email messages, or emails and reverse-911 phone messages that can be sent to cell phones and landlines.

Notify NYC for the Northeast Bronx will serve neighborhoods in the Bronx’s Community Board 10: Co-op City, City Island, Spencer Estates, Throgs Neck, Country Club, Zerega, Westchester Square, Pelham Bay, Eastchester Bay, Schuylerville, Edgewater, Locust Point, and Silver Beach. This area has both high-density and low-density housing that can test the effectiveness of the pilot program in varying urban conditions.

“Communities such as City Island and Throgs Neck are prone to flooding and northeast storms while Co-op City is in a wind corridor due to the height of its buildings,” said Council Member James Vacca, who served as District Manager of Community Board 10 for 26 years before his election to the City Council. “I urge residents to sign up for this program and hope its success will assure its future expansion.”

Notify NYC for Southwest Staten Island will serve neighborhoods in the southern third of the island throughout Community Board 3: Annadale, Arden Heights, Bay Terrace, Charleston, Eltingville, Great Kills, Greenridge, Huguenot, Pleasant Plains, Prince’s Bay, Richmond Valley, Rossville, Tottenville, and Woodrow. This part of Staten Island was selected as a pilot community because it has many coastal communities, and is near industrial facilities at Port Mobil and on the New Jersey side of Arthur Kill.

“I applaud Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Deputy Mayor Edward Skyler for once again embracing innovative technology to help make our City safer,” said Borough President James P.

Molinaro. “The reverse-911 system will be essential in the event of a natural disaster or other emergency by providing information in a quick and efficient manner to New Yorkers. I welcome this pilot program on Staten Island.”

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