



FIRE DEPARTMENT
9 METROTECH CENTER BROOKLYN, N.Y. 11201-3857

NICHOLAS SCOPPETTA
Fire Commissioner



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the FDNY

FROM: Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta

DATE: October 8, 2009

In the aftermath of 9/11, I was asked by Mayor Bloomberg to become his Fire Commissioner and help rebuild a Department that had been devastated by the worst terrorist act in our nation's history. Like all New Yorkers, I wanted to help the city recover from the tragedy. It was an extraordinary honor to be asked to lead the FDNY – which had come to symbolize the incomprehensible loss and, at the same time, the incredible strength and resiliency of our city and our nation.

The biggest challenge was to begin rebuilding the ranks while simultaneously learning the lessons of 9/11 and preparing to respond to another attack.

First, we needed to fix the radio communications system, and we did, along with enhancements to help ensure communications in underground facilities and high rise structures.

We also had to prepare for new terror threats and today our members are trained on multiple levels to respond to large-scale incidents, including chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks. Today, five times as many firefighters and EMS personnel have this advanced training, compared to before 9/11.

We obtained new protective masks and radiation detection devices, and developed large-scale decontamination strategies to keep our members safe.

We needed a state-of-the-art emergency operations center to replace the inadequate center we had on 9/11. Today, our \$17 million facility is the envy of fire departments throughout the world.

With the loss of so many members on 9/11, followed by thousands of retirements, we needed to dramatically increase both the amount and quality of our training. We've hired more than 6,000 firefighters and promoted more than 2,000 officers – all of whom have benefited from greatly expanded and improved training programs.

I increased the number of senior chiefs responsible for managing the Department and provided them with graduate-level management training from Columbia University, a first for the FDNY.

We needed an ongoing anti-terrorism strategy so we created our Center for Disaster Preparedness in partnership with the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

We needed new large capacity fire boats and will soon accept delivery of two new vessels - the first major additions of our marine fleet in 50 years.

We have issued three Strategic Plans outlining our goals and objectives and how to achieve them – something never done before in the FDNY.

To monitor the health of members who participated in the rescue and recovery efforts at the WTC site, our Bureau of Health Services developed and continues to operate a medical monitoring and treatment program that is now the gold standard.

To improve accountability we issued new rules and directives aimed at better controlling overtime abuses, overseeing off-the-line "light-duty" administrative positions, and strengthening drug and alcohol policies to improve public and member safety.

We also launched the most successful minority recruitment campaign in FDNY history that will improve diversity for years to come and make the firefighter ranks more reflective of the communities they serve.

In the aftermath of the Deutsche Bank tragedy that took the lives of two firefighters, we are re-engineering our field inspection system. We are working with IBM to create a \$25 million integrated inspection data system that will combine various internal and external databases and transform our inspectional process to one that is risk-based, enhancing firefighter and public safety.

The indisputable fact is that today's FDNY is - without question - better prepared, better trained and better equipped than ever before. And we have tangible proof of that. Fire deaths in the last eight years are the lowest on record. Our fire and EMS response times are the fastest on record. Last year, we had the fewest fires in the city in nearly 50 years. New Yorkers have never been better protected and served than under the past eight years of this administration.

The accomplishments noted here are just some of the extraordinary successes all 16,000 members of this Department have achieved since 2002. I am grateful and enormously proud of what all of you – our firefighters, officers, EMT's, paramedics, fire marshals, dispatchers, inspectors and civilian staff – have accomplished together. I am especially thankful to those who stayed on after Sept. 11 and dedicated themselves to the rebuilding effort and the many projects that have strengthened the Department. Your selflessness is commendable; your successes remarkable, and your dedication is in the very best tradition of this Department.

In August I met with Mayor Bloomberg and told him that, regardless of the outcome of the election in November, I would be leaving at the end of this year to pursue teaching opportunities – a plan which I had put on hold in 2001 when he appointed me. I again thanked him for the opportunity he gave me, and the tremendous honor it has been to serve as the city's 31st Fire Commissioner.

After 47 years in government and public service, there has been no greater reward than to have helped rebuild the Fire Department in the aftermath of 9/11. I am confident this Department is ready to meet the many challenges of the 21st Century.

It has been an honor to serve the city and the Fire Department. Thank you and God bless you all.