



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins Listens to Residents on Hurricane Impact

JACK M. MARTINS September 6, 2011

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Senator Jack Martins was back on the streets of Elmont Thursday knocking on doors and meeting with families, seniors and young people regarding the aftermath of Hurricane Irene. Martins has been visiting communities throughout the 7th Senate district assessing hurricane damage and listening to community leaders.

“You have to get out and listen to what’s happening. I lost power for days at my own house and had to throw out food from my family refrigerator just like countless families and

seniors. Trees are down, property is damaged and people are hurting. It's also real frustrating. That's why you need to be accessible and try to do the best you can to help people in their time of need," said Senator Martins.

Along with touring neighborhoods, Martins visited the headquarters of the Elmont Fire Department and received a briefing from Elmont Fire Chief Michael Capozziello and fire personnel on the Hurricane Irene Relief response operations in the greater community.

Since Sunday, Martins district office has been a hub for community members trying to receive information on tree removal, power outages and water damage. In response to community concerns, Martins office has been able to give community members advice and guidance on issues related to insurance, hurricane issues and route residents to the right agencies to help them with specific hurricane related matters.

At the same time, Martins has also been on the ground, talking to Mayors, residents, community leaders and business people in an effort to assist neighborhoods. On Thursday, Martins hit the streets in Elmont and visited Fallon, Emily and Doherty Avenues as well as Ruby, Nassau, Opal and Lenox Streets during his listening tour meeting with families and seniors.

Martins knocked on doors in the late morning and early afternoon hours and spoke to dozens of residents about their experiences. In each instance, a mini-town hall meeting would take place with neighbors coming out of their homes and talking to the Senator about power outages, damage to homes and issues revolving communication with LIPA on their front lawns.

"I wanted to see and hear for myself what their concerns, experiences and advice. I also wanted to lend a hand if I could be of any help," said Martins noting, "on each street in

Elmont I visited, the stories were similar but very important. The bottom line is that communication broke down with LIPA and many of our neighborhoods. There must be a discussion about how these issues are going to be addressed going forward to insure that this never happens again," Martins said.

Community members took great time to show Martins damage to homes, downed trees, low hanging wires and upended sidewalks in front of homes and backyards. "In each neighborhood, the damage was extensive. On the end of one street, we had an entire tree down and blocking the front door of a home. Around the corner, there was a tree balanced on a garage roof. At another home ,we had wires down in a backyard. And that was all in one neighborhood," Martins said.

One case was solved right on the street where a blind senior citizen had a tree fall onto a property and blocked the front door. Martins office contacted Town of Hempstead Highway officials who immediately responded and worked diligently to assist the senior.

As Martins walked in neighborhoods, people would come out and talk to him and discuss the hurricane's impact in the greater community and steps that need to be taken to alleviate the impact of power losses.

During one of the visits, a car stopped in the middle of Emily Avenue and three Elmont young people rolled down their window to talk to Martins about power losses and downed trees. Carl LaMarre, Fritz Paul and Kenneth Benjamin talked with Martins about the hurricane's destruction on their street. LaMarre also took the time to tell Martins that he appreciated the fact he was in the neighborhood. "It's great you're here and on the street trying to help," LaMarre said.

On Fallon Avenue, the Delani and Goulbourne families joined several of their neighbors and held an impromptu discussion with Martins about their concerns about lack of communication from LIPA officials. “We can understand that there was a disaster. What I can’t understand is the fact that they can’t tell you anything about how long it will take,” said Mrs. Delani. Martins wholeheartedly agreed.

Elmont Memorial High School student Cameron Goulbourne and his father Carl talked with Martins about their frustration about lack of communication and ‘not knowing’ what do. “What do families do? We had no power for five days and couldn’t get any information. How do you tell people to check a computer when they don’t have power. We called LIPA 5 times and couldn’t get any answers,” said Carl Goulbourne.

Martins also met with families on Emily, Doherty and Norfeld Boulevards. The Alohan family showed Martins the sporadic nature of the blackouts in their neighborhood and how some homes had power while others were without. In their particular circumstance, homes on each side of their house had power while they did not. Trees had damaged wires that come into the homes through backyards instead of from the street. “It’s tough being without power for 5 days,” said Daniel Alohan adding, “I go charge my computer at the Elmont Library and try to keep busy as best I can. We had to get rid of our food and are just hoping we can get power back up soon.”

Martins also met with Elmont Fire Chief Mike Capozziello, Assistant Chief Brian Schrieffer and firefighter Joe Taranto at the Elmont Fire District headquarters on Doherty Avenue. Martins was briefed on the over 80 fire calls throughout the community and clockwork precision response that the department deployed during the storm. “Time and time again, I’ve heard people tell me that the department was incredibly responsive, sympathetic and a godsend to countless homeowners in Elmont. From downed wires to rescuing people in stranded cars with water, to trees hitting houses and blocking roads, the Elmont Fire

Department worked nonstop,” said Martins.

Chief Capozziello remarked that the men and women of the Elmont Fire Department “love their community and love serving the people. These are our neighbors and friends and the work that was done was a job we love to do. You can be at someone’s home helping them in the afternoon and at dinner time be in line at Umbertos getting a pizza. These are our neighbors and we are here to help.”

During the Elmont Fire Department briefing, Martins asked questions about the nature of the calls, if there were any issues, shortages, needs or resource issues the State could assist the community. In addition, Martins paid his respects to the injured firefighters that were hurt during a raining practice at the Woodmere training center.

Last but not least, Martins toured the Elmont Road business corridor where flooding and continuing damage relief operations were ongoing on Baylis, Renfrew, Belmont and Ludlam Avenues. Highway, County, 5th precinct and Sanitation workers were busily picking up brush, cutting up downed trees and removing debris from the roads, curbs and culverts running up and down Elmont Road.