



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Governor Cuomo Declares State of Emergency in New York in Preparation for Potential Impact of Hurricane Sandy

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| ISSUE: **HURRICANES, NATIONAL DISASTERS**

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today declared a state of emergency in New York in preparation for the potential impact of Hurricane Sandy, which may hit New York State in the coming days. A state of emergency mobilizes resources to local governments that otherwise are restricted to state use only and suspends regulations that would impede rapid response.

The Governor is continuing to coordinate statewide preparation for the storm and has ordered the state's Emergency Operations Center in Albany to operate twenty-four hours a day. At the Governor's direction, state agencies and local governments are planning cooperative response efforts. Governor Cuomo and his administration have been in contact with local officials to coordinate preparation. The state government is communicating with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Weather Service to discuss the potential tracks of the storm.

“As we prepare for the possibility of Hurricane Sandy hitting New York State, I am activating all levels of state government to prepare for any potential impacts,” Governor Cuomo said.

“We are working with federal and local partners to follow storm developments and organize a coordinated response plan. With unpredictable weather conditions, we are taking the

greatest precautions – especially after our experience from last year’s storms. I urge New Yorkers to plan for hurricane conditions and follow news reports to stay updated on the storm’s progress.”

Governor Cuomo has asked President Obama for a pre-landfall disaster declaration. This would allow for State access to funds and FEMA resources to prepare.

Due to the impending storm, the Governor’s conference on Emergency Preparedness scheduled for October 29-30 in Albany is being postponed.

Governor Cuomo is overseeing state mobilization in preparation for the potential storm, including:

## **TRANSPORTATION**

- The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) is monitoring the progress of Hurricane Sandy and taking necessary precautions to protect its transportation network. The storm is tracking toward New York and holds the potential for high winds and heavy rain that could make it unsafe to operate subway, bus and railroad lines, as well as to allow vehicles on the MTA’s seven bridges and two tunnels. The MTA Hurricane Plan calls for an orderly shutdown of transit and train service before the arrival of sustained winds of 39 mph or higher. No decision has been made whether to suspend some or all service in advance of the storm, but ample notice will be provided of any suspension. Customers and the media should monitor the [mta.info](http://mta.info) website, which is updated continuously with service information as it becomes available. Customers can also call 511 for service information.
- New York City Transit/Metro-North Railroad/Long Island Rail Road: Crews are working throughout all three transit systems to inspect and clear drains, pump rooms, ditches,

swales, as well as flood-prone areas that will be continually monitored. Equipment like emergency response vehicles, cranes, excavators, back hoes, chain saws, generators, and pumps are checked, fueled, and ready for use – particularly in known low spots. Other actions include securing work sites against possible high winds, fueling equipment, stocking supplies and making plans to move trains, buses, equipment and supplies away from low-lying areas. Extra personnel will be assigned to report for duty before the storm is expected to make landfall.

- **Bridges and Tunnels:** All roadway and drainage systems at Bridges and Tunnels facilities are being checked and cleared of debris. Wrecker trucks and other response vehicles are readied to help motorists who may become stranded. Motorists are advised to reduce speeds when winds are between 40 and 49 mph in dry conditions, and 30 to 49 mph in windy and wet conditions. When the winds are 50 mph or more in dry or wet conditions, certain vehicles will be barred from using MTA crossings. These include motorcycles, tractor trailers, step vans, mini buses, trucks with open backs, cars pulling trailers, motor homes and vehicles carrying plate glass. If there are sustained winds of 60 mph or above, the MTA may close one or more bridges to all traffic.
- **Capital Construction:** All construction work has been suspended until further notice on East Side Access, the Second Avenue Subway, the 7 Line Extension and Fulton Center.
- **The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey** is making preparations to have a full complement of staff at all of its transportation facilities to ensure that the hundreds of thousands of customers who use them each day can be safely accommodated during this severe weather event. The agency also will activate its emergency management office to monitor the changing weather conditions and coordinate with the governor's offices in New York and New Jersey, the New York City mayor's office, other external stakeholders and the Federal Aviation Administration, which controls air traffic.

- At the Port Authority's five airports, officials have begun taking precautions including securing any outdoor loose materials and notifying tenants and lessees to do the same; checking and clearing all storm drains and roadway gutters; servicing and fueling all vehicles, generators and pumps; preparing and placing sand bags and preparing traffic control equipment such as cones and barrels. As the storm approaches, the Port Authority strongly advises airline passengers to check with their carriers on the status of their flight.
- Workers in the agency's Tunnels, Bridges and Terminals Department are reviewing high wind procedures and readying for potential traffic restrictions or closings.
- At the Port Authority Bus Terminal, staff is coordinating with all of the terminal's bus carriers to determine their service plans in the coming days.
- The World Trade Center staff notified contractors to secure construction sites and take precautionary measures including tying down and securing material and loose debris at construction sites; storing loose tools; and securing netting, banners, scaffolding and sidewalk sheds. Engineers also are implementing plans to secure cranes against the storm's winds, while crews are preparing to use pumps, sandbags and other measures to stem flooding.
- The Thruway Authority is carefully monitoring the progress of Hurricane Sandy to ensure that the agency is ready to handle any potential impacts to their system. The agency has inspected drainage systems and culverts to ensure that they are functioning properly and not blocked, prepared and tested equipment that may be needed for storm response, and mobilized staff for deployment as needed. As usual, the agency's Statewide Operations Center functions around the clock to monitor conditions throughout its 570-mile highway system.

## **UTILITIES**

- Administration officials conducted a conference call earlier today with the Chief Executive Officers of all the public utilities and the Public Service Commission to plan for storm preparations, recovery and response. Approximately 2700 utility workers are on alert to assist in storm preparation around the state. Additional crews will be deployed for post-storm recovery.

## **FLOOD CONTROL**

- New York Power Authority (NYPA): The water level of the Blenheim-Gilboa Pumped Storage Power Project's lower reservoir on the Schoharie Creek has been lowered to the minimum depth as a precaution against flood conditions. NYPA has also released water to lower the level of the Hinckley Reservoir where it operates a small-hydro facility to create additional storage capacity.
- The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is working closely with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection to lower the water level in the Schoharie and Ashokan reservoirs to prevent flooding in Schoharie and the Catskills. DEC has authorized an emergency drawdown of the Schoharie Reservoir at a rate of approximately 600 million gallons per day. Lowering the water level can reduce the amount of water that may spill over the top of the Gilboa dam and flow downstream into the Schoharie Creek. This release will assist in creating a void space in the Schoharie Reservoir. Waters drained from the Schoharie is diverted to flow through the Shandaken Tunnel to the Esopus Creek then into the Ashokan Reservoir. DEC has authorized releases from the Ashokan Reservoir at a rate of 600 million gallons per day to facilitate a reduction in peak storm flows through maximization of reservoir storage capacity. These releases will be terminated at the onset of storm precipitation or if any flood risk arises based on monitored stream gauges.

- The Canal Corporation has implemented a plan to lower water levels in the Mohawk River sections of the Erie Canal between Fort Plain and Schenectady in order to increase the rainwater storage capacity for potential rainfall associated with Hurricane Sandy. The Canal Corporation is working with marinas, contractors, and commercial and recreational vessels on the Canal System to clear vessels from these impacted areas, and will begin lowering these levels by approximately three to five feet on Saturday, October 27. If the projected track of Hurricane Sandy suggests severe impacts to the Mohawk River Basin, the Canal Corporation will further reduce these levels to their lowest winter points, beginning on Sunday, October 28. In addition, to help create more rainwater storage capacity mitigate the impact of any potential flooding associated with Hurricane Sandy, the Canal Corporation began lowering the level of Hinckley Reservoir near Utica on Thursday, October 25.
- The Hudson River – Black River Regulating District is preparing to store rainfall in response to potential significant inflow to the Great Sacandaga Lake and Indian Lake reservoirs in the Hudson River watershed and to the Stillwater, Sixth Lake, and Old Forge Reservoir in the Black River watershed. After the storm, and after any river flooding conditions have subsided, the Regulating District will maximize the release of water from each reservoir in a reasonable and prudent manner to lower water elevation in each reservoir as quickly as possible.
- The Lake George Park Commission, which oversees the lake level of Lake George and ensures that the operator of the outlet dam in Ticonderoga (LaChute Hydro) operates within the “rule curve” to ensure the welfare of the public and infrastructure and power generation. The commission is coordinating with LaChute Hydro on the operation of the penstock and waste gates which control lake levels and has recommended immediate maximum drawdown from the current level to allow capacity.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- The New York State Police has implemented internal agency disaster preparedness plans for Hurricane Sandy. Troop personnel remain ready for assignment to county and local Emergency Operations Centers (EOC) as needed. Personnel in each troop have been pre-identified to be available for deployment to hardest hit areas of the state if necessary. All emergency power and communications equipment has been tested. Specialized resources including boats, aircraft, and four wheel drive vehicles are staged for deployment.
- The actual strength of the hurricane will depend on its course up the east coast of the United States. Parts of the state that are adjacent to coastal waters, such as Long Island and New York City, are considered most at risk. Inland locations can also be affected by heavy rainfall and strong winds, which can cause flooding and power outages.
- Governor Cuomo urges New Yorkers to take stock of their emergency supplies, such as water, non-perishable food, radios, batteries, supplies for any pets, and first aid kits. The Governor also encourages New Yorkers to check in with neighbors, especially the elderly or disabled, who might need assistance to ensure that their needs are met if emergency instructions are issued.

### **The Department of Health also issued the following tips for New Yorkers in preparation of the storm:**

- Have plenty of non-perishable food and water supplies on hand. Make sure battery-operated radios and flashlights are available and have an ample supply of batteries. Hand-cranked flashlights and radios that do not need batteries may also be useful. Have a first aid kit available and make sure there is adequate supply of medicines on hand for those who require it.

- Know how to contact all family members at all times. Identify an out-of-town friend or family member to be the “emergency family contact.” Then make certain all family members have that number. Designate a family emergency meeting place where the family can meet in case you can’t go home.
- Pay particular attention to relatives with special needs, small children and pets. Know where to relocate pets during a storm because many shelters are not able to accept pets. Shelters often only accept “service animals” that assist people with disabilities.
- Prepare an emergency phone list of people and organizations that may need to be called. Include children’s schools, doctors, child/senior care providers, and insurance agents.
- Follow the news and emergency broadcasts of local radio and television stations that will provide up-to-date official information during a storm emergency, including recommendations to evacuate specific areas.
- Find out what emergency plans are in place in your community and how you will be notified in the event of an emergency.
- Know the hurricane risks in your area and learn the storm surge history and elevation of your area.
- Store important documents such as insurance policies, medical records, bank account numbers, and social security cards in waterproof containers. Also have cash (in small bills), a checkbook, and credit/ATM cards readily available.

**New Yorkers can get up to date information at [governor.ny.gov](http://governor.ny.gov) and following our office on Twitter @NYGovCuomo. The public can also receive notifications via email, text and phone call through the state’s notification system, NY-Alert by going to [NYalert.gov](http://NYalert.gov) to sign up for free.**

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