

Responding to Sandy

Overview

The Executive Budget reflects a comprehensive plan to recover from the devastation brought about by Superstorm Sandy. The Budget ensures that resources are in place to continue our response to this crisis and build the infrastructure to prepare for the next disaster based on lessons learned.

Congress is expected to approve \$60 billion in disaster aid for states impacted by Sandy. The 2013-14 Executive Budget includes provisions to support the implementation and coordination of \$30 billion in Federal disaster aid for recovery, rebuilding and mitigation activity in New York State.

Superstorm Sandy was the largest storm to hit the Northeast in recorded history. Its impact was devastating: 131 were people killed, including 60 deaths in our State; two million customers were left without power; approximately 300,000 housing units were damaged or destroyed; roads and subway tunnels experienced catastrophic flooding; and major power transmission systems were damaged. Sandy followed just a year after Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee hit New York, clearly demonstrating that we must prepare now, and in earnest, for increased frequency of extreme weather events.

To help New York State learn from Superstorm Sandy, Governor Cuomo convened four commissions: NYS Ready, NYS Respond, NYS 2100, and a Moreland Act Commission. The NYS Ready Commission was tasked with preparing our networks, systems and structures to withstand major weather events. The NYS Respond Commission was charged with making recommendations to ensure the ability and capacity to effectively respond to the next natural disaster. The NYS 2100 Commission reviewed the vulnerabilities faced by the State's infrastructure systems and developed specific recommendations to increase New York's resilience in five main areas: transportation, energy distribution, land use, insurance, and infrastructure finance. The Moreland Act Commission was established to study, examine, investigate, and review the response, preparation, and management of New York's power utility companies to Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene, Tropical Storm Lee, the December 2008 Ice Storm, and other major storms that have impacted the State.

The recommendations of these commissions were presented in early January, and include approaches to protect against power loss, maintain fuel supply, harden the State's infrastructure, speed evacuations, improve disaster response coordination, improve communications with citizens both before and during a disaster, and train citizens how to prepare and stay safe during a disaster. These recommendations formed the basis of the crisis action plan presented by the Governor in the 2013 State of the State Address. The 2013-14 Executive Budget begins the implementation of this plan.

Proposed 2013-14 Budget Actions to Implement the Governor's State of the State and Other Initiatives

The Executive Budget provides support for Superstorm Sandy recovery and rebuilding projects, programs, and other initiatives. Specifically, the Budget includes appropriations of \$21 billion for disaster-related recovery, rebuilding and mitigation. An estimated \$30 billion of additional Federal aid will flow through these appropriations or be directly administered by the Federal government, local governments and other entities. These resources will support:

- **Community Reconstruction and Mitigation Plans.** Communities that were impacted by Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee will be eligible for \$2 billion in grants to support the creation of Community Reconstruction and Mitigation Plans. These plans will be created by each Community Reconstruction Zone, and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program criteria and target numbers will be used to govern the program.
- **The Recreate NY Smart Home and Recreate NY Home Buy-Out Programs.** These program will ensure that New York rebuilds to modern building standards and, in locations where rebuilding is impractical, provide a voluntary home buyout alternative.
- **Rebuilding and Hardening of Critical Infrastructure.** Investment will be made in the areas of transportation, fuel supply, water supply, wastewater treatment systems, and electric distribution and flood protection systems.
- **Repair and Build Natural Infrastructure to Protect Coastal Communities.** Restore damaged beaches, dunes, and berms, and build new natural infrastructure including wetlands, reefs, dunes, and berms to reduce the impact of wave action, storm surges, and sea level rise.
- **Repair and Rebuilding Health Care Systems.** Improvements will be made at hospitals, nursing homes and clinics to ensure these critical facilities are more resilient to future storms.
- **Financial Assistance.** Resources will be made available for businesses, local governments and others affected by the storm.
- **Universal Protocols for Emergency Response.** To improve coordination among State and local emergency response professionals, the State will provide training for key officials from local emergency management operations. The Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) will collaborate with SUNY to develop a training program which covers incident command, response, recovery, and State emergency protocols. Those completing training will be certified by the State, and would maintain that certification through a multi-year renewal process and ongoing training.
- **A New “Resilient Information System.”** Existing mobile messaging and social networking technologies will be leveraged to integrate disaster planning, preparedness and response. This will include “NY-TEXT”, a program to allow mass text messages to be sent to all wireless phones in a chosen area, and a communications portal through which the public can access information on service outages, disaster preparedness tips and, following a disaster, resources for finding and requesting financial and other assistance.
- **Specialized Training for National Guard Members.** Training will be provided in key emergency response categories such as power restoration, search and rescue, heavy equipment operation, and crowd management. During Sandy, more than 4,500 Guard members provided relief and accelerated the recovery. With additional training and skills, these Guard members can have an even greater impact when responding to disasters.
- **Pre-positioned Stockpiles of Essential Equipment.** Critical equipment such as generators, water tankers, chainsaws, piping, light towers, and pumps will be purchased and pre-positioned in anticipation of the next emergency.

- **A Statewide Volunteer Network.** Establishment of a network of individuals, non-profit organizations and corporations will help the State meet critical needs in disaster relief efforts by matching volunteers with opportunities to assist.
- **A Citizen Education Campaign.** This program will better prepare New Yorkers by providing information, resources and supplies, reducing the number of families in need during a disaster and allowing first responders to focus greater attention on those who are most vulnerable.
- **Establishment of Vulnerable Population Databases.** First responders, outreach workers, and healthcare and human services personnel will have access to information to help find and serve those who may need assistance.
- **Energy Sector Worker Training.** This new program will ensure availability of skilled professionals to quickly diagnose and replace damaged components and maintain a state of good repair.

The Executive Budget also authorizes Design/Build for agencies that will implement disaster recovery projects. As demonstrated by the Tappan Zee Bridge project – whereby Design/Build was key to reducing estimated project costs by 20 percent – this strategy is a proven way to reduce costs and speed completion.

The Budget implements the Moreland Act Commission recommendations to strengthen the oversight and enforcement mechanisms of the Public Service Commission (PSC) to ensure public utility companies are held accountable and responsive to regulators and customers. Specifically, the PSC's authority is expanded to initiate administrative proceedings to recover more robust civil penalties, review utility company performance and emergency planning, ensure compliance, and modify or revoke certifications previously issued to any gas or electric utility. Finally, privatization of the Long Island Power Authority will be pursued, which would subject the new provider to PSC oversight, in order to protect ratepayers and ensure reliable service.