

The Past Eight Years

This issue of *WNYF* marks my last as New York City Fire Commissioner. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for all that you have done and for allowing me to become part of the FDNY family. It has been one of the high points of my nearly 50-year career in civil service to be a part of such an incredible team of professionals--Firefighters and EMS personnel alike. Everyone's dedication, courage and commitment provide the highest level of emergency service to our City. Your daily actions stand as the very definition of public service. It has been a privilege to work with all of you these past eight years.

When then-Mayor-Elect Michael R. Bloomberg asked me to become the City's 31st Fire Commissioner in December 2001 after more than four decades in government, I quickly realized the challenges I would face trying to help rebuild an agency devastated by the events of 9/11. But now, eight years later, FDNY stands in its rightful place as the greatest fire department in the world. Despite the incredible losses FDNY suffered that day, the rebuilding we worked at together resulted in a Department that is stronger, better trained and better equipped than at any other time in its 145-year history. Today, we are truly prepared to face the challenges of the 21st century.

Of course, nothing could have been accomplished during my eight-year administration without a terrific staff of uniformed and civilian employees. Each day, I witnessed the amazing work done by our members when they're called upon for help, no matter what the emergency. I have been to building collapses, subway collisions, multiple-alarm fires, tornado touchdowns, children trapped on school buses, plane crashes and numerous other major calamities throughout this City. At each and every incident, teams of FDNY emergency responders came quickly, worked tirelessly and did whatever was necessary to help others no matter what the circumstances. And through my interactions with government officials, corporate groups and community representatives, I can tell you with certainty that the many citizens and visitors to this great City are grateful for all you do.

Earning public trust does not come easily. FDNY has solidified this trust with all of its accomplishments during the past eight years. Through many innovative programs,

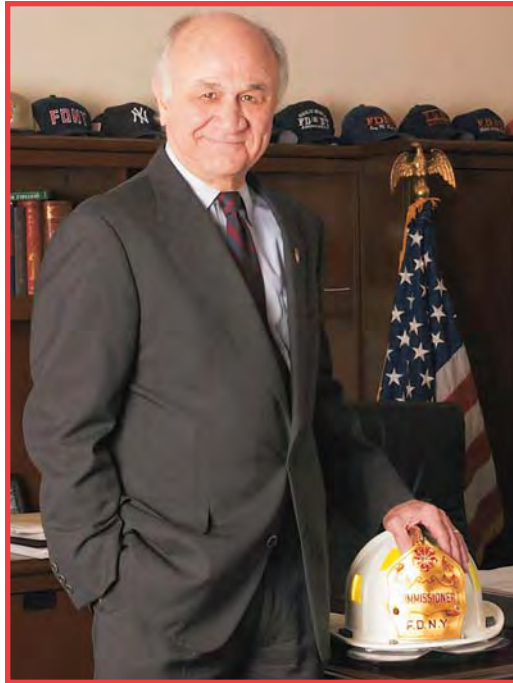
we are in a stronger position than ever to provide the very best emergency response services. We have worked tirelessly to rebuild across all bureaus of the Department. We have increased training throughout the ranks, built a state-of-the-art operations center, developed an award-winning Officer management program and introduced new technologies in our apparatus, equipment and communications.

FDNY stands better prepared than ever to meet the threats New York City faces in the future. Our members are trained for numerous large-scale incidents, including chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks. Today, more than five times as many Firefighters and EMS personnel have this advanced training than they had before 9/11. We also have launched a medical monitoring and treatment program to help members and retirees with any health issues that may have resulted from WTC response and recovery.

Our efforts for these past years are paying off. Last year, we responded to fires faster than ever before and witnessed historic lows in the number of civilian fire fatalities. We're also administering first responder health care treatment to those who are critically injured.

As I conclude my tenure here at FDNY, I am confident that the Department can meet whatever challenges lie ahead. Mayor Bloomberg certainly has selected an excellent new Commissioner in Salvatore J. Cassano. As you know, he comes to the job with more than four decades of public service as a Firefighter and Fire Officer. He was my partner in rebuilding and improving the Department. I wish him and each one of you my best wishes and Godspeed. Stay safe always.

I am very proud of what we have accomplished together. It has been an extraordinary honor to lead the FDNY, one of the most important--and most storied--of all of New York City's institutions. I am confident that the work we have done together will serve the Department and this great City well for many years to come.



(See article on page 4--The Past Eight Years: Rebuilding and Strengthening the FDNY.)