

Governor's Island, WTC Memorial, Firehouse Closings, WTC Memorial

Q. Is the FDNY skewing response times for the neighborhoods where six companies closed this year?

A. Last month I testified about response times before the City Council. The testimony was prompted by the media, which asked for an update on how response times had been affected by the fire company closings. While I have always believed in the necessity of an open government, I was wary of releasing those numbers so soon. It is just too premature to draw any conclusions from two or three months of data. (See accompanying chart with the data we released.) It should be pointed out

The following data compares the change in response times in the areas where six engine companies were closed on May 25, 2003.

Unit	June-Aug. 2003	June-Aug. '00-'02	+/-
Engine 36	4:43	4:00	+ :43
Engine 204	5:26	4:33	+ :53
Engine 209	4:27	3:59	+ :28
Engine 212	4:29	4:09	+ :20
Engine 261	5:24	4:54	+ :30
Engine 278	4:31	4:08	+ :23

that four of the six areas continue to have response times that are below the city-wide average (4:48).

The fundamental disagreement with the unions centers on how we calculate these response times. Since the engine company closings, the unions now say that we should change the way we calculate response times. Like every other emergency agency in the country, the FDNY has always measured response times by the first unit that arrives at an incident. Response times, like all statistics, are used to measure and compare. Changing the way we compute these statistics will instantly strip them of their relevancy and meaning. If we suddenly decide to measure response times the way the unions suggest, we won't be able to see how our service differs from that of two years ago, and we won't be able to compare our performance to other agencies across the country.

A second issue raised by the unions involved the use of *estimated* response times in our computer analysis. In order to project what the impact would be, we

used computer-generated data. To be fair and consistent, we compared apples and apples—computer data both for *estimated* response times with and without the six fire companies. The purpose was to project what the impact of those closings would be. The unions argued that we should have used actual statistics along with computer-generated projections. While the unions would be happier with this because it would show an impact greater than what really was, it would be unfair and even duplicitous to mix, as it were, apples and oranges.

We used the technology available to us to predict what the impact would be, and thus far, what we've seen is about what we predicted.

(Actually, the increase in response times are – on average – less than what the computer projections were.) But there are no computers responding to these emergency calls. It is the work of members in the adjoining fire companies that are picking up the work-

load and continuing to protect the people and property in those six communities. I commend the effective job they have been doing these past five months.

Q. Is the City going to close more fire companies?

A. Despite requests for city agencies to participate in another round of budget reductions (about \$30 million for FDNY), there are no plans to close more units.

Q. Why is the FDNY providing fire protection to Governors Island when firehouses are being closed in more populated areas?

A. After more than 200 years as a base for both the U.S. Army and the U.S. Coast Guard, Governors Island was recently returned to the possession of New York City. Now that the city has taken control of the island, it also needs to provide basic services such as fire protection. The island might be relatively uninhabited, but it does contain numerous structures and the responsibility of the FDNY includes not only the protection of

lives, but also the protection of city property. Plans include the further development of the island – and I expect we will continue to provide an adequate level of protection for the people who work and/or live there.

Q. Is Project Liberty money going to run out at the end of the year?

A. In the aftermath of the WTC attacks, funding from Project Liberty allowed the Department to dramatically increase the number of counselors and programs available to our members and their families. Our Bureau of Health Services, under Chief Medical Officer Kerry Kelly and Director of Counseling Services Malachy Corrigan, lobbied vigorously for a continuation of these vitally needed funds – which were scheduled to run out at the end of this year. Thanks to our lobbying efforts and the key assistance of U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton, funds have been secured at least through June 2004. We strongly believe that we will need to continue funding mental health services for some years to come, and we'll continue seeking federal assistance for our enhanced counseling services through Project Liberty.

Q. Is the FDNY's leadership in favor of a separate memorial at the WTC site dedicated to our fire-fighters?

A. Absolutely. I have always believed that any memorial at the WTC site should appropriately reflect the sacrifice our members made on that tragic day. As thousands of office workers fled the towers and the fire, our members ran towards the destruction. They didn't lose their lives; they gave them. Failing to recognize this selfless act would neglect an important chapter in the story of September 11. The memorial would solely be about victimization, which was not what all of September 11 was about. Although the FDNY suffered tragically that morning, it also helped orchestrate the most successful rescue operation in the history of this city, helping more than 25,000 people escape the carnage. We in the FDNY will always remember the sacrifice our members made. The memorial should ensure that the rest of the world never forgets!