

Garbage Trucks Will Help Protect New York for New Year's Eve

By Ashley Southall

The New York Times

12/29/2016

When revelers begin arriving at Times Square on Saturday to ring in the new year, they will hear the familiar sound of police helicopters overhead, go through the mandatory bag screenings and see the usual mass of police officers. But they will also be greeted by something that has only recently become a regular feature of the city's security infrastructure: strategically positioned garbage trucks loaded with sand.

The Sanitation Department bills itself as New York's Strongest, and its hulking vehicles have made the agency a key ally as the Police Department and other law enforcement agencies seek to guard against truck attacks like those in [Nice](#), France, and [Berlin](#).

Trucks have been deployed outside Trump Tower on Election Day and [along the route of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade](#).

The trucks weigh about 16 tons, and nearly double that with a full load of sand, according to Vito A. Turso, a spokesman for the Sanitation Department.

"They're pretty immovable," he said.

And that is the point, the police commissioner, James P. O'Neill, said at a news conference on Thursday in Times Square with Mayor Bill de Blasio. While there are no specific threats related to the event, he said, the sand-filled trucks serve as a deterrent to the type of truck attacks in France and Germany that killed dozens of people and injured hundreds more.

President-elect Donald J. Trump, who has been at his estate in Florida, is not expected to be in Manhattan for New Year's Eve, but the Police Department said Thursday that it expected close to two million people to converge on Times Square on Saturday for the annual ball drop.

"We're going to have one of the most well-policed, best protected events at one of the safest venues in the entire world, given all the assets that we've employed here," Mr. O'Neill said. "And all of this will ensure that New York City has yet another safe and enjoyable New Year's Eve celebration, as we do every year."

Sixty-five of the Sanitation Department trucks are part of a security plan that involves close to 7,000 police officers, assigned to guard against crime and terror by land, sea and air, as well as in the subway.

Beyond Times Square, some of the sanitation trucks will be stationed near a planned fireworks display in Central Park. Similar blockades will be put in place on the streets leading to the Coney Island Boardwalk as well as on the promenade itself. More than 100 police vehicles will also be positioned to restrict access to event sites.

The police will be watching from many vantage points. There will be helicopters hovering, observers on rooftops and plainclothes officers among the crowds. Their views will be complemented by hundreds of police cameras across the city.

On the waterways, the department's Harbor Unit will mingle among the dinner cruise ships and ferries plying the waters around Manhattan. And back on land, houses of worship will receive special attention for New Year's Eve services.

But Times Square remains the biggest draw, and Chief Carlos Gomez, the department's top uniformed official, said those seeking to watch the ball drop would be required to go through several screenings before they would be allowed into one of the 65 pens set up for spectators between Times Square and West 59th Street.

"We'll use metal detectors to scan individuals entering the observation areas," he said. "We will also deploy our full complement of explosive-detecting K-9s, both at the event and throughout our transit system."

"This will be a very well-protected event, probably our most-protected event," Chief Gomez said.

Many of the same measures will be deployed underground, where officers will be riding trains and inspecting bags and containers.

Gradual street closings between 33rd and 59th Streets were expected to snarl traffic in Midtown, and the police strongly urged people to use the subway.

Mr. de Blasio reminded visitors that umbrellas and large bags would not be allowed in Times Square.

"I want to be real clear up front," the mayor said. "Just don't do it."

But demonstrators, he said, are free to bring signs, so long as they do not use them to block the view.