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news from Assemblyman **JEFFREY DINOWITZ**

81st ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz:

- CITY IS NEGLIGENT ON BRONX HS of SCIENCE EMERGENCY PLANNING
 - NOT PREPARED IN CASE OF CHLORINE ACCIDENT

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz warned that poor city agency response to the March 20 bomb scare at the Bronx High School of Science underscores the city's negligence in emergency planning for its most prestigious school.

"With the irresponsible DEP handling deadly chlorine across the street, it's alarming that first responders and other emergency teams have no clear evacuation plan," the Assemblyman said, "Looking at the response from a risk management perspective, I give them a 'D'."

Two times between June, 2007 and October, 2008 the DEP spilled chlorine at the Jerome Park Reservoir -- directly across the street from Bronx Science.

"Thankfully those accidents weren't large enough to directly affect the school," Assemblyman Dinowitz said. "But incredibly, there is nothing in place for any of the schools in the area in case something more serious does happen" he said. "One would think emergency planning would be the City's first priority, but judging from their non-existent plan in case of a chlorine leak and how last week's bomb scare was handled, clearly it's the farthest thing from their minds."

In the most recent incident at Bronx Science, after an emailed bomb threat was received, a fire drill was called, followed by an announcement to evacuate the building. But without effective communication systems to help coordinate and no support from the NYPD to direct traffic, the process to get students to a safe haven was severely hampered. As a result, hundreds of students were limited to walking on the sidewalk and when they got to nearby Clinton High School, the metal detection process meant they would have to stand in the street and wait.

"During this sort of emergency, you want to close the streets to traffic and have everyone move into shelter as soon as possible," said Assemblyman Dinowitz, who graduated from Bronx Science in 1971. "School officials reacted to the bomb scare as best they could, but without proper guidance from the NYPD, FDNY, OEM, and DEP, there's no question that student safety

was compromised," said Assemblyman Dinowitz. "Does something have to go terribly wrong before the city reacts?"

"The school did a good job but there's need for more support from the City and NYPD," said Bob Lang, head of the school's UFT chapter. "It's also troublesome that they are handling chlorine gas right across the street. If there is a chlorine spill are we supposed to be in the building or out of the building? We need professional advice in terms of planning."

"Bronx Science's parents are very concerned about potential threats to the health and safety of our children in the Jerome Park Reservoir area, whether due to noise, dirt, dust, and truck traffic related to the DEP's drilling, possible deadly chlorine gas leaks, or emergency evacuations," said Jennifer Nelson, Co-President of the Bronx H.S. of Science Parents Association. "The responsible city agencies have not demonstrated to us that they have well-thought out and developed procedures in place."

"Also, communication with Bronx Science and the other schools in the area has not been very effective. We call upon the City to lay the necessary groundwork and increase our confidence that emergency situations, should they occur, would be effectively dealt with," Ms. Nelson said.

Emergency planning in the area has other problems, too. "Just as the DEP did not notify us about the chlorine leaks, no one notified the residents in Scott Tower to remain inside during the evacuation and investigation," stated Sonia Lappin, a long time resident of nearby Scott Tower Housing Cooperative.

Ironically, two hours after the 'all-clear' in the bomb scare, the DEP sent out an email notifying local community groups and schools that they would begin hoe-ram digging across the street near the Jerome Park Reservoir. "With all this going on, we can only hope the contractor's employees are prepared to take positive steps in case of an emergency," stated Karen Argenti of the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality (BCEQ), "because the city is not ready to."