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In NY, after Ida, Biden calls climate 'everybody's crisis'

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
AND ADINA GENN

President Joe Biden declared that climate change has become “everybody’s crisis” on Tuesday as he toured neighborhoods flooded by the remnants of Hurricane Ida, warning it’s time for America to get serious about the “code red” danger or face ever worse loss of life and property.

The storm dumped record amounts of rain onto already saturated ground and was blamed for more than a dozen deaths in the city.

Biden’s visit came a day after New York Gov. Kathy Hochul announced that Biden had approved an expedited Major Disaster Declaration that provides for federal financial relief for those eligible as they recover from flooding damage caused by Ida.

To qualify for Federal Emergency Management Agency assistance, counties must prove they have incurred \$5 million or more in damages. Now, Nassau County is calling on residents, including those in Great Neck, who incurred damage from Ida to contact its Office of Emergency Management at 516-573-9600, so that the county can qualify for FEMA assistance.

U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer called Ida’s devastating effects on the region a “warning bell,” saying upgrades are needed now to weather hurricanes and other storms.

“If Ida has shown us anything, it is the need to pass legislation that deals with the wrath and fury of storms amid a very real climate crisis,” he said in a statement. “We have two tracks to meet this urgent need: the bipartisan infrastructure deal and the reconciliation bill now in negotiation. We need to pass both—and ASAP.”

“The bipartisan infrastructure deal will



AP Photo

President Joe Biden speaks as he tours a Queens neighborhood impacted by flooding from the remnants of Hurricane Ida.

be a building and jobs boon for critical New York needs that have long been can-kicked,” he said. Projects such as Gateway, the Second Avenue subway, the East River Tunnels and Penn Access would be supported by the package, which “represents massive investments that will rebuild and revive the Empire State’s infrastructure, which recent hurricanes have shown is in dire need of upgrades and resiliency funds.”

On Tuesday, Biden spoke after walking streets in New Jersey and then Queens, meeting people whose homes were destroyed or severely damaged by flooding when Ida barreled through. The president said he

thinks the damage everyone is seeing, from wildfires in the West to hurricane havoc in the South and Northeast, is turning climate-change skeptics into believers, but years of unheeded warnings from scientists, economists and others mean time for action is short.

“The threat is here. It is not getting any better,” Biden said in New York. “The question is can it get worse. We can stop it from getting worse.”

He said the threat from wildfires, hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding and other extreme weather must be dealt with in ways that will lessen devastating effects of climate change.

“We can’t turn it back very much, but we can prevent it from getting worse,” he said. “We don’t have any more time.”

The natural disasters have given Biden an opening to push Congress to approve his plan to spend \$1 trillion to fortify infrastructure nationwide, including electrical grids, water and sewer systems, to better defend against extreme weather. The legislation has cleared the Senate and awaits a House vote.

Biden said the plan would also create “good-paying jobs.” On Tuesday, the White House asked Congress for an additional \$24 billion in disaster aid to cover the costs of Ida and other destructive weather events.

Pat Foye declines ESD leadership post

Patrick Foye informed Gov. Kathy Hochul that he won’t take the helm of Empire State Development, after he was tapped as interim chief by former Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

Foye, a Port Washington resident, left the Metropolitan Transportation Authority this summer, where he served for four years as president, chairman and CEO. Cuomo appointed Foye interim president and CEO of ESD in June.

However last week, Foye, who previously led ESD under former Gov. Elliot Spitzer, told Hochul he won’t take the ESD job to allow the new governor a chance to appoint

her own choice.

“Today, I relayed to Governor Hochul that I am declining the position of president and CEO of ESD,” Foye wrote in a written statement. “As with any transition, the governor deserves an opportunity to build her own team, and to that end she is off to a very strong start. While I no longer seek to serve in the capacity originally envisioned, I pledge my support, service, and assistance to her and her administration.”

In response, Hazel Crampton-Hays, Gov. Hochul’s press secretary issued a statement that praised Foye for serving New York with

integrity, honor and care.

“He has brought skill and professionalism to the complex challenges he was tasked with in his many roles, and we are grateful he has offered his expertise to help the state continue to move forward,” Crampton-Hays said in the statement.

Previously, Foye served as deputy county executive under former Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano, was a trustee at LIPA and also served as president of United Way of Long Island.

Kyle Strober, executive director of the Association for a Better Long Island, said the

region owes a great debt of gratitude to Pat Foye.

“As a Long Islander who led the NY/NJ Port Authority through Superstorm Sandy and, most recently, as head of the MTA, he provided extraordinary leadership during an unprecedented pandemic while securing billions in federal funds to protect and strengthen our transportation infrastructure,” Strober said via emailed statement. “We hope this isn’t the final public service chapter for one of Long Island’s most effective advocates.”

— DAVID WINZELBERG