

We're Highlighting Resiliency Because We Are A Lot Better Off Than Four Years Ago

Friday, October 28, 2016

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Gov. Christie: We're Highlighting Resiliency Because We Are A Lot Better Of...

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Transcript:

Governor Christie: I was leaving about 11 or 11:30 on the evening of the 29th and got called back in to the ROIC because of what was happening up here in Bergen County, that water immediately, quickly, was rushing down the streets flooding, getting people out of their homes in places like Moonachie and Little Ferry and you know, it was an awful situation, and we sent in the State Police search-and-rescue teams along with folks, really brave folks, from the local PD's and the local EMS who went and were saving people in boats from the second floors of their homes. We need to continue to remember that those folks, just as much as the folks at the Shore, had their lives turned upside down and that's why in starting to commemorate the four-year anniversary I wanted to start today in Bergen County. I'll head to the Shore later, but I wanted to start in Bergen County because I think sometimes people don't pay nearly as much attention to what happened up here from the press and the public as they should. We're highlighting resiliency today because man, we are a lot better off than we were four years ago. Think about it: 325,000 housing units were impacted across the state, damages totaling over \$5.9 billion, 19,000 small businesses were closed, some temporarily, others for good, their losses totaling over \$8.3 billion. 70% of the gas stations in northern New Jersey were offline. Even the stations that were open had sparse delivery because, I remember talking to Ralph, saying like we got to get the power to the refineries because we can't get any gas if we can't refine it and 71% of the electric distribution system in the state was stopped four years ago tomorrow. It impacted 5 million of our 8.9 million residents. We had a hundred transmission lines out of service. 5,000 transformers were damaged or destroyed. 9500 utility poles were damaged or

destroyed, and fifty substations were impacted by the flooding. That's not a small problem, and over the last four years what we've done is work with folks like PSE&G, JCP&L, Atlantic City Electric, to make sure that they learn the lessons from those days. And what you see behind me is just one of the examples of what we've done in the aftermath and appropriately used private sector resources, help from the federal government and the state government to get these things done. We made it a priority to improve this resiliency in the aftermath of the storm and I think it was the right thing to do. And now projects like the one behind me are commonplace around the state. PSE&G alone has done this over and over and over again across the state. This has not only meant greater resiliency for the public going forward, it has meant important work for the men and women of Local Force 72 and other unions around the state who are experts at doing this work, and do it well, and do it at high quality, and it has provided great paying jobs for them. The utility companies across the state have themselves invested \$650 million in these projects and programs since Sandy. The gas distribution companies have invested over \$1 billion in natural gas infrastructure and improvement projects. We learned extraordinary lessons four years ago, that we can't let our guard down. I remember talking to the folks at New Jersey Natural Gas as the barrier islands and the shore had their homes burning down. And there was a lot of conversation about whether to turn the gas off to those barrier islands or not because of what it would mean for the infrastructure. But New Jersey Natural Gas made the right decision, they turned the gas off, the homes stopped burning – but it meant that they had to invest a lot in rebuilding that infrastructure, they did and now it's stronger and better than it was before the storm. Remember, it's four years ago and you see how much this place has changed and improved all across the state. Remember that Katrina was 11 years ago and Louisiana still has empty neighborhoods, infrastructure that is not rebuilt. You know, everything moves faster here in New Jersey and I understand that. And the expectations of our citizens are that things will move faster, but it is truly an extraordinary accomplishment by all the people involved that four years later our state is back and rebuilt. We got to look at what we still need to do, and as long as there are still people – and there are a few – who aren't home, we need to get them home. But for the most part, these folks have done the job that needed to be done to get people back at home and get our resiliency back.

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