

NJ health commissioner applauds Sandy-recovery work at Jersey City Medical Center



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By Ron Stein/The Jersey Journal

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New Jersey Health Commissioner Mary E. O'Dowd saw first hand today the work the Jersey City Medical Center has completed to put its first-floor back in working order in the wake of Hurricane Sandy.

When the superstorm struck on Oct. 29, the first floor of the Grand Street hospital flooded within two minutes, Joseph Scott, the president and CEO of the Medical Center and its parent, LibertyHealth, said today.

But the hospital never skipped a beat, he said.

Patients were relocated to the second and emergency generators kicked in to keep operations running.

Today, O'Dowd saw the \$3.5 million renovations done to the Medical Coordination Center, the Emergency Department, and other areas of the first floor that were damaged after the hurricane struck.

"I think they handled themselves well under the circumstances," O'Dowd said. "Jersey City was able to take on additional patients during difficult times. That was one of the most impressive things."

The water damage Sandy caused to the walls on the first floor were evaluated soon after the storm hit and was immediately replaced with dry wall, officials said. The Medical Center met its goal of completing the renovations before Christmas Day.

In addition to the several feet of water that covered much of the Medical Center's first floor, 8 of the hospital's 42 ambulances were destroyed in the storm, along with 60 employee vehicles.

Both O'Dowd and Scott stressed learning from the past to be better prepared for the future.

Consequently, blueprints have been drawn up for a \$7 million flood-prevention system that will include a wall surrounding the Downtown facility to decrease the chances of flooding. Scott anticipates the project to be completed by this summer.

"I have never seen water move so fast," Scott said about the Sandy flooding. "Now we are recovered and on our feet. Things are going great."