



# THE CUTTING EDGE

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NEWSLETTER

THIS IS

WHAT

HIT US!

SPECIAL SANDY COVERAGE



## President's Message

# Knocked Down by Sandy, Local 94 Stood Tall, Strong, Together

Even in the days before Sandy smashed into our shores, the approaching storm impacted our lives, our families, and our jobs. As engineers we are all well aware of our responsibilities as first-responders in our buildings.

As the storm approached and our friends and neighbors were busy making preparations to protect their homes and their families our brothers and sisters in Local 94 were called away from their homes and families, to work around the clock to ensure the workplaces for millions of New Yorkers would be operational once the storm had passed.

Nothing we had ever seen before could have prepared us for the damage and devastation Sandy left behind.

Yet the effort and response by you, the men and women of Local 94 has been nothing short of remarkable! Before, during, and in the weeks and months after the storm your courageous, dedicated, creative, ingenious, generous and concerned response has been humbling.

The damage and devastation left in Sandy's wake will linger and remain with us for years to come. We also know that no matter what challenges we will have to face our members will rise to meet them.

The members of Local 94 have never been more worthy of our

first responder titles. We have all witnessed and heard stories of what happened throughout our city and communities as the storm struck in late October. And, now and nearly everyday since we continue to see and hear of acts of quiet heroism and generosity.

While there is no way we can single out every individual, every act of courage or kindness, it is important that we shed some light on how our members went above and beyond and continue to go above and beyond their responsibilities.

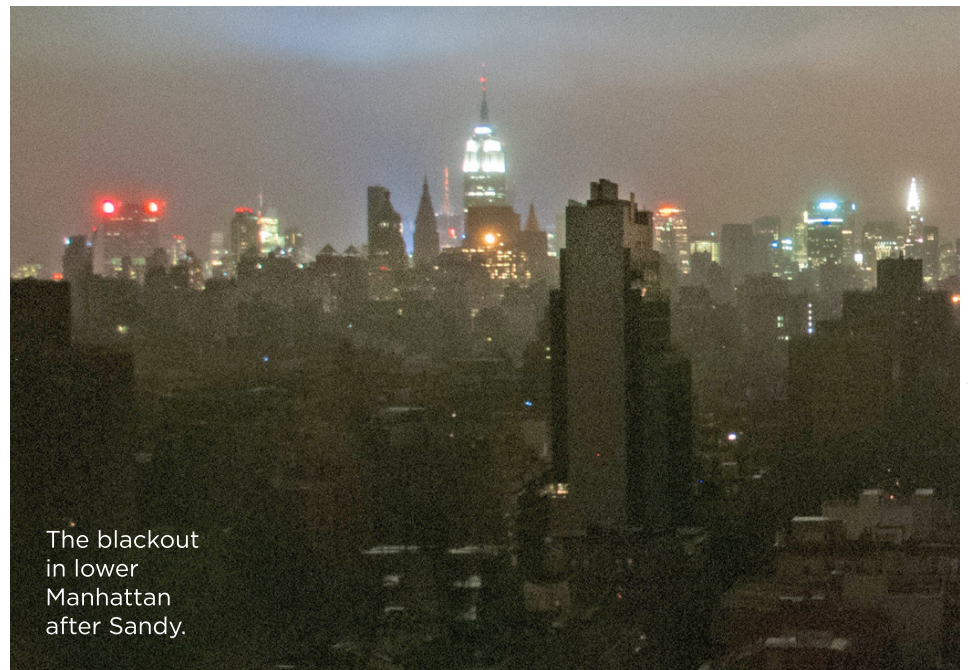
In some cases your actions and efforts attracted media attention. We have inserted links that will take you to these stories. With a click of your mouse you'll see a story from the lo-

cal weekly paper in Battery Park City which singled out the actions of the crew at PS 89/IS 289. Another will take you to a Daily News column by Juan Gonzalez which tells the spellbinding tale of heroism and a life-saving rescue during a harrowing night at 80 Pine Street.

Please read them. And read them with pride.

We know there were many other stories out there. With this special edition of the Cutting Edge, we hope we have shed some light on the others. We hope we have succeeded.

Kuba J. Brown



The blackout in lower Manhattan after Sandy.

LENA NICHOLSON PHOTOGRAPHY/FLICKE

# Braving the Storm, Minimizing Damage, Bringing Buildings Back to Life

It has been nearly three months since Superstorm Sandy ripped through our neighborhoods, our homes, and our city. Three months and there are still some buildings in lower Manhattan that remain dark; and the air is still thick with the smell of diesel fuel and the constant rumble of giant generators.

Yet, thanks to the dedication and sacrifice of hundreds of Local 94 engineers and helpers, things could have been be so much worse. While most families prepared and remained home before and after Superstorm

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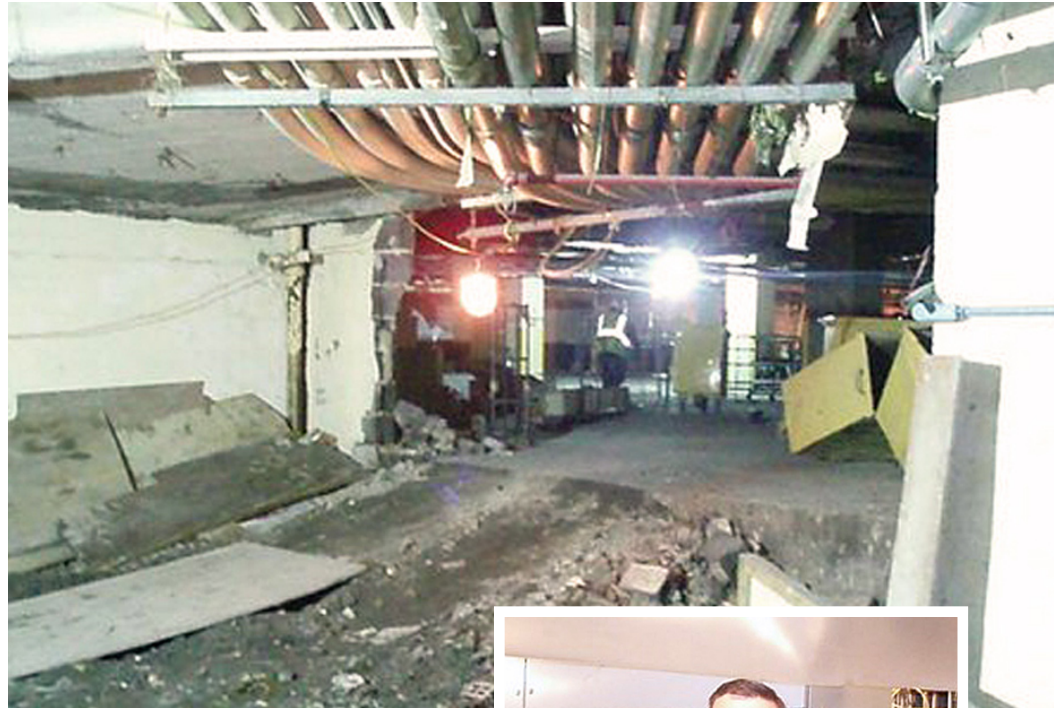
‘As far as we knew there had never been a water problem in this building since it opened in 1911.’

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Sandy, our members were miles away from their homes protecting and later, restoring “their buildings.”

Here are some of their remarkable tales.

Chief engineer Ed Liltz wasn’t expecting Sandy to create much of a problem at 80 Maiden Lane. “As far as we knew there had never been a



The demolished basement at 80 Pine Street. Right, Chief Engineer Eric Leimeister.

water problem in this building since it opened in 1911,” said Liltz.

Engineer Anthony Marrale, had reported to work on Sunday, the day before the storm was expected to arrive. “The backup generators had been prepared. We’re thinking if we get the call from Con Ed to shut down we’re ready,” recalled Marrale.

At 6 p.m. Monday October 29 the call from Con Ed arrived. They were preparing to shut down to



make sure nothing would happen to the transformers on 14th Street. As Marrale waited the power went out; soon the sewers began to backup and within 30 minutes seawater was

# Braving the Storm, Minimizing Damage, Bringing Buildings Back to Life



From left, Jimmy Quinn, Chief Ed Liltz and Antony Marrale and their jerry-rigged cooling system at 80 Maiden Lane.

flowing into the building.

“It was coming from everywhere. I’m thinking uh, oh we’re in trouble,” said Marrale. “I told the three porters who had been called in with me ‘we have to get out of here.’ In no time we had 7 1/2 feet of water. Everything was flooded, the sub-basement; the basement, the lobby.

“All our equipment was lost. Everything, chillers, turbines, tens of millions of dollars of equipment were wiped out,” said Marrale.

Remarkably the Local 94 crew had the building up and running

within two weeks. That amazing feat accomplished through the creativity and ingenuity of the crew which has gone so far as to jerry-rig a window fan to help cool down the engine for a water pump. “Everything is done manually,” explained Liltz. “We’re running with just the basics but we are running.”

### **Thought they knew what was coming**

Having experienced the 1993 nor’easter Norman Bellion, Chief Engineer at 180 Maiden Lane knew

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‘In no time we had 7 1/2 feet of water. Everything was flooded, the sub-basement; the basement, the lobby.’

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to expect water. Sandy went well beyond what he anticipated.

“The nor’easter in 1993 brought two-feet of water around the building and left 40-inches in the basement,” said Bellion. After that storm 28-inch high floodgates were installed.

“I was a Boy Scout. I thought we were prepared, and we were expecting the worst,” said Bellion. “What happened turned out to be far worse than anything we could have expected.”

Planning for the worst case scenario Bellion and his eight-member put together crash carts of equipment and supplies; moved the PC’s, mechanical drawings, plans and all critical information and equipment to the fifth floor. “At least we knew our vital information would be safe,” he said.

# Braving the Storm, Minimizing Damage, Bringing Buildings Back to Life

By 7:30 Monday night those moves proved prescient as the water poured over the 28-inch gates. “As the water pushed against the building and the doors began to fail. The water blew out a swing door and water was soon coming from everywhere,” he said.

Fortunately Con Edison had cut the power before the final surge. “The water was washing against the walls and we just stood in the darkness. It sounded like Niagara Falls.”

Like many others Local 94 crews the team spent the next several days in the building working around the clock to pump out the water and preparing to go back into operation. Thanks to the crash cart and other preparations and despite the cold and darkness they were able to keep themselves somewhat comfortable on the fifth floor.

“Most importantly, no one was injured,” said Bellion.

### “It was like the Titanic”

The crew at 80 Pine Street was not as fortunate. The five million gallons of water that surged through the basement not only inflicted injuries it almost cost building manager Robert Hirst his life.

In classic understatement Chief Engineer Eric Leimeister declared “what the crew in this building did was above and beyond.”

It was just after 7pm when the Leimeister received a call from the chief at 110 Wall Street warning that foot-high surge of water was rushing along the street. “It hit the building like a tsunami,” said Leimeister.

The surge of water was so strong; it came through the walls and floors. “It was coming from everywhere,” said Leimeister.

The surge was so powerful it destroyed the walls of the underground garage. Five million gallons of water was now roaring through the basement carrying Leimeister

and members of his crew away and through the basement.

The water forced Leimeister through a double-steel door and three sheetrock walls into a basement chamber. “It was like the Titanic,” Leimeister recalled. “It was pitch black and cold water kept rising. I didn’t know how I would get out.”

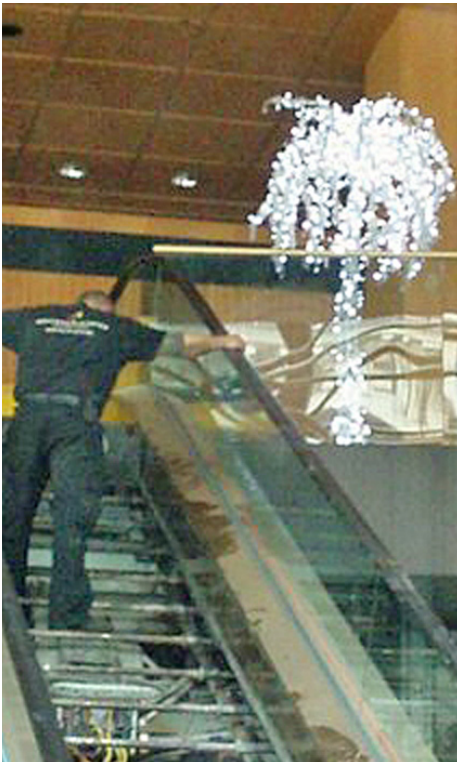
That is when Leimeister’s eye caught sight of a single strobe light hanging off a wall. Focusing on the light Leimeister swam out of chamber and began searching for others.

At the opposite end of the



From left, Dennis Mooney, Junior Cruz, Albert Cintron and John Kemrag from the Ritz Carlton, Battery Park.

# Braving the Storm, Minimizing Damage, Bringing Buildings Back to Life



The mezzanine of 180 Maiden Lane.

basement, building manager Robert Hirst and assistant chief Joe Breman, had been carried along like so much floating debris by the surge. Battered and bashed by the walls and supplies and equipment carried along with them they found themselves in another of the chambers.

Hirst and Breman found themselves trapped inside the chamber as water rose to ceiling. A Genie lift blocked the entrance. It was only through the quick thinking and ingenuity of Local 94 members Ryan

Fletcher and Dave Romero, who after repeatedly tossing a fire hose to the struggling pair, were able to pull them to safety.

“They saved their lives,” said Leimeister.

This extraordinary tale of the horrors and the acts of bravery and courage at 80 Pine Street was perhaps best told by Daily News Columnist Juan Gonzalez. You can read it here:

<http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/maintenance-supervisor-fought-sandy-article-1.1219182>

Bloomberg News reporter Betty Liu filed this report including first-hand accounts of the spellbinding events at 80 Pine Street:

<http://www.bloomberg.com/video/-lucky-to-be-alive-sandy-s-havoc-under-wall-st-aJNtu-1ahQ5ejztfqcf175A.html>

### Makeshift Dams and Sandbags Save Schools

Sandy’s havoc forced New York City schools to close for a week, some closer to the water far longer. Yet PS 89 and IS 289 in Battery Park City were saved from major long-term damage thanks to the engineering team led by Dave DiGiacomo. DiGiacomo, who is also an

instructor at the Local 94 Training Center, and his team of Frank Diorio, James Willie, Jose Velez, and Michael Clark, worked throughout the weekend before the storm to prepare and protect the school building.

Using carpets and plywood as makeshift dams to block doorways and openings and buttressing those efforts with sandbags the team be-

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Sandy’s havoc forced New York City schools to close for a week, some closer to the water far longer.

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lieved the school was prepared for the storm. As we all learned, Sandy was a storm like no other.

While water did manage to flow into the building, the damage was kept to a minimum and the schools were able to open one week later. The Battery Park City Broadsheet captured their story here:

[http://www.ebroadsheet.com/Entries/2012/11/12\\_November\\_12\\_Monday.html](http://www.ebroadsheet.com/Entries/2012/11/12_November_12_Monday.html)

## Braving the Storm, Minimizing Damage, Bringing Buildings Back to Life

### “We Just Watched”

Located at the foot of Manhattan just along side the entrance to the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, few hotels in New York seemed in greater jeopardy than Ritz Carlton, Battery Park. Hotel management was so concerned all the guests had been evacuated the day before the storm.

With the guests having left, the engineering team went about their work of securing the hotel. “Based on our experience with (Hurricane) Irene we didn’t think we’d have a problem with water,” Dennis Mooney explained. “We had a team in during the weekend working to get everything off the ground, place sandbags and tape around the windows and doors. We figured we were high enough we wouldn’t have to worry too much about the water.”

But as the storm approached and the Weather Channel began reporting an expected 6-foot surge at the Battery, Mooney and engineering team grew concerned. “We knew we’d done everything we could’ve done,” said Mooney. “As the tide began to rise, we knew what we’d done wasn’t going to be enough.”

As the storm raged on water began to seep, and then flow in from all sides. “It was coming into the boiler room so rapidly there was nothing we could do. We just watched,” said Mooney.



THAT HARTFORD GUY/FLICKR

The Brooklyn Battery Tunnel was flooded with about 12 feet of water after a tidal surge caused by Sandy, Oct. 30, 2012. The Ritz Carlton is along side the entrance to the tunnel.

‘We knew we’d done everything we could’ve done. As the tide began to rise, we knew what we’d done wasn’t going to be enough.’

As the water rose, so did the concern the water could rise above the valves on the chiller and boiler, or damage the transformers. Maybe because so much water found its way into and flooded the tunnel, but miraculously the water stopped rising less than just 2-inches below the valves.

“We’ve never had water like that,”

said Mooney. “We were pumping out for two days.”

### Everybody Stepped Up

There are few buildings in Manhattan more vulnerable to the ravages of the rising East River than 77 Water Street. Engineering manager Phil Procopio and Chief Elliott Hoffnung were so concerned by the potential

# Braving the Storm, Minimizing Damage, Bringing Buildings Back to Life

disruption the entire six man crew was called in the day before the storm to prepare.

Four-foot high Jersey Barriers were filled and placed around the entire building. Maps and plans were moved, the steam was shut in advance of the storm and anything that could be moved was carried to higher ground. Still, the storm proved too much.

“Based on forecasts and tide tables we expected the water to surge sometime around 8 on Monday night,” said Hoffnung. “At 6 the

water was trickling up Old Slip; within 10 minutes the water had risen two-feet. By 6:45 it was flowing over the barriers. We knew we were lost,” said Hoffnung.

Because of its proximity to the water, the chillers at 77 Water Street are located on the 13th floor. Unfortunately the electrical system was not and that vital equipment was destroyed. “Fortunately, the switch room is on the first floor so it saved us from replacing everything,” said Hoffnung.

Even at that the team continued to work in the cold and dark for days.

“Our people were here for five, six days,” said Procopio. “It takes a very special person to focus on work when you are away from home, and your own families are on your mind.”

When Procopio returned to his home in New Dorp for the first time that Thursday he found his neighborhood had been ravaged. While his home was relatively unscathed some of his neighbors were not as lucky. “I no sooner returned home when I found myself helping a neighbor clear away the damage.”

Procopio was not alone.

New Dorp,  
Staten Island,  
Nov. 11, 2012.



JOHN DE GUZMAN/Flickr

# Volunteer Efforts



## Our Members Respond to Storm with Open Hearts, Helping Hands

From Atlantic City to Montauk and across Staten Island, Coney Island, Gerritsen Beach, Breezy Point and Rockaways and out along the coast to Long Beach and up through the Long Island Sound, Sandy had left its mark. Lives were lost; homes were shattered, burned to the ground or damaged beyond repair.

The Local 94 leadership and membership immediately came together to determine the best and most effective ways to help. The first priority was helping our members.

In the weeks after the storm Local 94 Business Manager Kuba Brown called a meeting of Business Agents, and the Executive Board members in the offices of Local 94 to determine



Emergency meeting of Local 94.

just how hard our members had been hit. “We know there are a lot of people whose homes have been damaged. They will need help. But we also know they have insurance,” said Brown told those at the meeting.

“I also want to make sure the people who don’t own homes; those

members who rent, those who live in basement apartments and may not have insurance; we have to make sure they get the help they need,” added Brown.

Immediately after that meeting the work toward providing that help and making sure no one was overlooked was underway. Phone calls were to city, state and federal agencies and elected officials. Issues regarding how to structure financial and other assistance were explored.

Less than a month after the storm had hit, Local 94 held an emergency meeting at the Local 6 auditorium. On hand were officials from FEMA, the American Red Cross, the AFL-CIO, the Central Labor Council,

# Volunteer Efforts

## Our Members Respond to Storm with Open Hearts, Helping Hands

Chase Bank and the Small Business Administration, all were available to provide information, and more importantly answer questions.

That November 20th meeting was also open to all Local 94 members who had not suffered any great damage, but wanted to volunteer to help their union brothers and sisters. On one side of the room members who needed help sat at tables and provided information about the extent of their damage and their immediate needs. At another row of tables other Local 94 members sat down to volunteer to help.

“We are going to need manpower,” Jack Redden pleaded at the meeting. It turns out he was appealing to the converted. Of the 160 members attended that meeting, more than 130 were there to offer their help. Since that meeting more than 250 members of Local 94 and their families have volunteered and helped with cleanup and repairs.

Scott McGowan was also at that meeting. Only he was there seeking help.

McGowan was working at 11 Penn Plaza when the Sandy’s rising tides all but washed away his Gerritsen Beach home. The storm left the midtown building relatively unscathed. McGowan and his family weren’t as fortunate. Miles away and unable to help McGowan’s wife



Scott McGowan, top right, inside his ripped-out living room. McGowan family welcome help and visit from Local 94 business reps Ray Macco, Jack Redden and Mike Gadaleta. Left, the temporary trailer that the McGowans are staying in while their home is being repaired.

Elizabeth was home with her wheelchair bound father, and her two children ages 3 and 5 as flood waters filled the house.

“We were wiped out. Everything gone,” said McGowan as he filled out the questionnaire. As McGowan filled in the details of five-foot flood waters that filled the entire first

floor of his home, Patrick, his five year-old, was busy creating crayon drawings at the same table. And, even facing the prospect of having to rebuild, McGowan was able to smile as spoke of the boy’s first reaction to the flood. “He was at the top of the staircase on the second floor and he wanted to know if we could

## Our Members Respond to Storm with Open Hearts, Helping Hands

swim in the living room pool,” said McGowan.

Along with the much needed help McGowan, like so many others who had been displaced needed to know not only when help would come, but where they would live until they could rebuild.

### Local 94 Volunteers Answer the Call

Through the efforts of local volunteer and support groups McGowan and his family soon found themselves living in a winterized trailer in their front yard. “The people from Geritsen Beach Cares put out an email blast looking for people to loan winterized trailers,” McGowan explained. “They pulled our name out of a hat. We got the first one.”

A Christmas wreath was hung near

the door and small tree was already decorated before Jack Redden, Ray Macco and Mike Gadaleta arrived with cleanup supplies, gift certificates and toys for Patrick and Morgan, his 3 year-old sister.

The McGowan’s were among dozens of Local 94 families across Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, Long Island and New Jersey who were visited over the course of a mid-December weekend and provided with materials, a little elbow grease and other support.

“The business reps, executive board members, the training director and other volunteers were out over the course of the weekend. We visited about 90 members,” explained Redden.

Prior to the visit the member’s needs were assessed, supplies were pro-

vided. “Most people needed help with cleanup,” explained Redden. “And those who have children under the age of 13 were presented with \$100 Toys R Us gift certificates,” he said.

The Local 94 volunteer effort is ongoing as members continue to help with demolition, and restoration. Members are helping members by putting up sheetrock, installing water heaters and doing other work.

Another team of Local 94 volunteers spent a Saturday in Keansburg, NJ helping Michael Frasco rebuild his storm damaged home. “We helped clean everything out and prepared everything for the contractors,” said Tom Hart.

“We’ve been making these visits, putting up sheetrock, doing any other kind of things that need to be done,” said Hart.



A team of Local 94 volunteers helped Michael Frasco rebuild his home.

## Our Members Respond to Storm with Open Hearts, Helping Hands

Because many of those who suffered damage are still waiting for FEMA and insurance monies the volunteers are limited in what they do. “We’re doing what we can,” explained Redden. “Right now we have the manpower and we’re providing it.”

### Local 94 & Rapid Repair

On a cold, windy December morning Brian McAuliffe, Local 94 engineer Lee Roberts were busy restoring heat inside a storm damaged home of a Great Kills widow. McAuliffe and Roberts were among the hundreds of skilled union workers participating in the NYC Rapid Repair program.

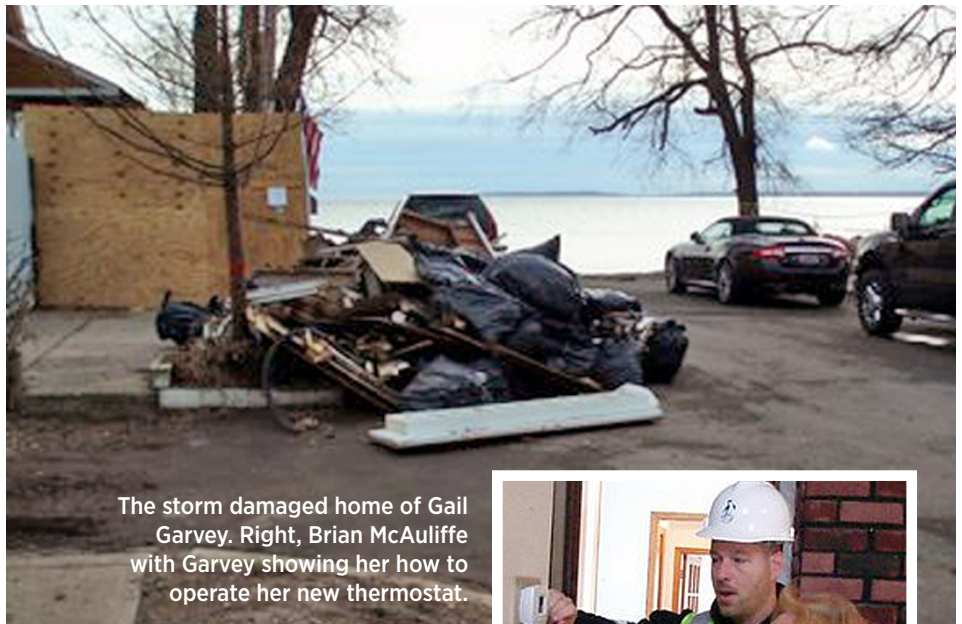
“Today is a very big day for us,” said McAuliffe. “We’re installing a new boiler, for the first time in more than a month this house is going to have heat.”

As McAuliffe spoke, Roberts was in the basement finishing making the final connections in the home of 61 year-old Gail Garvey. Located less than a block from water and a tiny, idyllic until Sandy you could not want for a better setting.

While the house still stands everything inside was washed away by Sandy.

“The water was coming up through the floors. I will never be able to recover what I lost,” said Garvey.

And, more than six weeks after the storm Garvey was without heat until



The storm damaged home of Gail Garvey. Right, Brian McAuliffe with Garvey showing her how to operate her new thermostat.

‘Hallelujah! I have heat,’ shouted Garvey as she put her hands over the vent. ‘These guys have been phenomenal. They called, they arrived on time and now I have heat. This is great.’



operate the new thermostat.

“Hallelujah! I have heat,” shouted Garvey as she put her hands over the vent. These guys have been phenomenal. They called, they arrived on time and now I have heat. This is great,” she said.

Ironically, Roberts who was helping Garvey and others as part of the Rapid Repairs program, was himself a victim of the storm. “I lived in a basement apartment in the Rockaways,” said Roberts. “Everything was lost.”

“I know what these people are go-

the visit from the Rapid Repair team. The team arrived at Garvey’s home just after 8 and by 10:30 that morning McAuliffe was demonstrating how to

## Our Members Respond to Storm with Open Hearts, Helping Hands

ing through,” said Roberts. “I’m just glad I am able to help.”

The Rapid Response teams are union members including electricians, plumbers, carpenters, sheet metal workers and engineers from locals throughout the metropolitan area. Those men and women work under contract with Conti Construction on Staten Island. The Local 94 members are subbed under Penguin.

“Team leaders meet at 6 am and at 7:30 we’re out the door,” said McAuliffe.

While the results of the program throughout the region have been mixed, the teams and the leadership have been working in what are clearly unique circumstances. “We can’t do everything. We are focused on getting people heat and hot water,” explained Greg Winsko the Staten Island project manager.

“We are trying to get to 20, 25 homes a day. The challenge is obtaining materials, pipe fittings, just getting materials and equipment is a challenge. We are doing the best we can.”

And, according to figures released

by New York City 10,000 families have been put back on their feet since the start of program. Many provided with new hot water heaters, furnaces and other major electrical repairs.

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The Local 94 volunteer effort is ongoing as members continue to help with demolition, and restoration.



### Still More to be Done

The response to storm and the help and support provided from both the local leadership as well as the member-to-member effort has been remarkable.

Along with all help and support from the local and the membership, the International Union of Operating Engineers National Charity Fund approved and distributed \$3,000 checks to more than 120 Local 94 families.

But there is still much to be done.

In what has been a national embarrassment it has taken Congress more than three months to approve \$51 billion in recovery aid. Even at that, 180 members of congress, 179 Republicans and 1 Democrat voted not to approve the money.

And, until those dollars work their way to New York and New Jersey all those thousands of families’ plans to rebuild their homes and their lives remain on hold.

“I just want my family to have some sense of normalcy back,” said McGowan as he stood on the beams of his bare living room floor.

Everyone can agree with that.

*If you have been affected by Sandy,  
or are in need of more information about obtaining help, that information  
is available on the Local 94 website here:*

<http://www.local94.com/hurricane-sandy.aspx>