



**Assemblyman Rory Lancman
Chairman, Assembly Subcommittee on Workplace Safety
December 13, 2010**

New York City's Theater District is especially vulnerable to emergency situations. The sheer quantity of visitors to the midtown New York venues is a safety concern in itself, but thousands of theater workers also navigate these popular theater houses every day, scoring the shows, sewing costumes, handling lights, arranging sets and, of course, performing on stage.

On May 1, 2010, these safety concerns were magnified by a smoking car bomb positioned near the entrance to the Minskoff Theater. This event highlighted how under-prepared theater workers are in dealing with such situations. To date, no Occupational Safety and Health Administration or New York City Fire Department standard has been routinely enforced to address emergency preparedness in theaters. The Subcommittee on Workplace Safety intends to rectify this safety problem and to prevent future complications.

On Monday December 6, 2010, the Assembly Subcommittee on Workplace Safety and the Assembly Committees on Labor, Governmental Relations and Cities held a Roundtable discussion in order to address the safety issues currently troubling theater workers and to hear all sides of the issue. In attendance were industry union representatives, including the International Association of Theatrical and Stage Employees (IATSE) Local 1, Actors' Equity, IATSE Local 798, United Scenic Artists Local 829, IATSE Local 764, and the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, who gave personal accounts of their experiences working in theaters and described their safety concerns. Theater owners representing the Shubert Organization, Nederlander Producing Company of America, and Jujamcyn Theaters gave a logistical and administrative perspective on the issue. The New York City Fire Department and US Department of Labor - Occupational Safety and Health Administration offered comprehensive insight into the current laws and regulations for theaters and how they are being enforced, while the New York City Office of Emergency Management outlined the resources available to theater workers and owners in the event of an emergency.

The Roundtable gave all sides an opportunity to voice their opinion and offered a platform for solutions and reform. Suggested improvements included that the New York City Fire

Department will consider employee concerns from the Roundtable in the upcoming 2011 revisions of the New York City Fire Code; the Occupational Safety and Health Administration will offer Emergency Action Plan training to theaters, increase the number of theater inspections, and investigate Emergency Action Plans during each inspection; theaters will consider conducting mandatory, compensated employee “Life Safety Training” every six months; and the Office of Emergency Management will work to improve communication lines between theaters.

The Subcommittee on Workplace Safety is dedicated to improving security in theaters and plans to lead the effort in creating a task force, representing all stakeholders responsible for addressing emergency preparedness and safety concerns in theaters.