

NYPD Coronavirus Operations

Voiceover

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Welcome to *The Beat*—a podcast series from the COPS Office at the Department of Justice. Featuring interviews with experts from a varied field of disciplines, *The Beat* provides law enforcement with the latest developments and trending topics in community policing.

Jennifer Donelan

00:16

Hello, and welcome to *The Beat*. I'm your host, Jennifer Donelan. Today's episode is virtual and we have a very special guest with us. We have Chief Fausto Pichardo. He is Chief of Patrol Services for the New York City Police Department and we are so excited to have him with us. Chief Pichardo, thank you so much for joining us.

Chief Fausto Pichardo

00:34

Thank you, Jennifer. It's great to have you on this call. I appreciate it.

Donelan

00:37

Thank you. And I'm going to tell folks some information that they probably already know, but in case they don't, I want to make sure they know this: The NYPD is one of the oldest police departments in the United States and is the largest police force in the nation. The men and women of the NYPD serve a population of 8.3 million residents that are dispersed over 302.6 square miles, making New York the most densely populated city in the country. However, NYPD is not unique in that it, like police departments throughout the United States, is having to conduct operations in the face of the coronavirus. Today, we are speaking with Chief Pichardo and we will be discussing the impact of the virus on NYPD operations and I know that it was significant.

There's going to be so many lessons to be learned here so I'm really excited about this conversation. So, again, thank you for joining us. Before we get started, I always like to ask all of our guests the same question because I think the answers are so fascinating and they vary, right? No two people follow the same path. What attracted you to law enforcement, Chief?

Pichardo

01:42

Well, Jennifer, I really appreciate your opening remarks, especially the historical perspective. And we are indeed celebrating our 175th anniversary this year, a tremendous, tremendous police force. And we're fortunate that we are well resourced, but to your point in your question, you know... a young kid immigrated from the Dominican Republic to the United States by way of New York City in the Lower East

Side of Manhattan. And if you recall anyone who was familiar with New York City in the 80s and early 90s, it was the height of the crack epidemic and the war on drugs, certainly—probably throughout the country—but definitely in New York City and specifically in the Lower East Side.

And, you know, as a young kid, you know, all you want to do when the summer comes around is go downstairs, maybe play handball, play some catch, play some street football. There were no fields back then, right? It was a... if you will find a concrete park, you were lucky. And noticing every Saturday morning and Sunday mornings at 8:00 a.m., about 40, 50, up to 60, 65 people getting on line to be “served,” to buy crack or cocaine at the very footsteps of my building, a five-story walk-up, was troubling. So much so that my mother would not allow me nor my brothers and sister to go outside into the street.

So, for lack of a better word, I was locked up in my own apartment as a young kid. The whole summer. And one specific summer in 1995, there were approximately 12 murders on one block. And think about the magnitude of that: one city block, 12 murders. Now, where we are today in New York City, we can go one whole week in the whole city of 8.6 million people sometimes with as few as zero, and at most, maybe, sometimes nine murders in a week in the whole city.

So looking at that, you know, I kind of took a personal vow and said that it wasn't right. I appreciated—as one would appreciate any parent who's looking out for the wellbeing of their child—and recognize her commitment and her point of view as to why I couldn't go out in the street. And I said if I ever had an opportunity to do something so that no other child in this city in any neighborhood could live through a summer like I lived through and my brothers lived through for a couple of years, I would do everything that I could. And that's really how I embarked in this journey and I've had a blessed career.

Donelan

04:08

Full disclosure to our listeners, my family is from that area of New York, specifically Lower East Side. And I can remember traveling up there as a child and grandma... we were right at her hip. Everything was very strict. You know, the beautiful thing about the Lower East Side, it has all that flavor and all that history, and it's just such a mix of people. And you're right: So many people were held captive in their homes because of what was happening outside of their homes. So good on you for taking all of that and doing something about it. Do you remember what your first assignment, or one of your first assignments, did you learn any lessons then that you've taken through your career?

Pichardo

04:46

You know, it's so interesting you bring that point because before I officially joined the NYPD as a sworn uniform member, I actually—for those that are not aware, we have probably the largest volunteer police force in the country, if not the world, we have approximately 4,000 auxiliary police officers—and in 1995, I took that first step and became an auxiliary police officer in my local precinct, the 7th Precinct in the Lower East Side. And, you know, these are the folks that, you know, we don't get paid. They don't get paid for it. They volunteer their time out of their life and their schedules to give back to the

community, to have a high visible presence in parks in the street, engage the community in a way to protect the community. And my first introduction to the NYPD was an auxiliary police officer from 1995 to 1997. In 1997, while I was in college, a program that's called the Police Cadet Corps...

It's a program where you actually become a civilian paid member of the police department. And it's usually for college students and, again, it's a segue into a career within the police department where you actually work within the precinct and I did that for a couple of years. And in 1999, I was officially sworn after I completed my BA in Criminal Justice. I was sworn in as a police officer in July of 99 and I was assigned to the Midtown North Precinct in Times Square, the crossroads of the proverbial world. So I did five years there. I took a couple of promotional exams and fast forward to where I am today. So I've had a pretty, pretty good run. I cannot complain about one single thing. The job has been extremely, extremely good to me.

Donelan

06:27

You've certainly been steadfast in what you wanted to do and you stuck with it. I mean, that is amazing. What dedication. Since you were talking numbers about the auxiliary, which is awesome, though—that's a tremendous number of people who are doing that for free—you know, at the end of the day, you know, we live in a world that's very much like, "What, what's in it for me?" So to see that those types of numbers and people were just volunteering, that's amazing. So let's look at the numbers a little bit. The NYPD has approximately 36,000 sworn officers, 19,000 civilians, 77 precincts that each serve a population of between 70,000 and 150,000 souls, which is the size of many midsize American cities.

The NYPD also has 12 transit districts that police the New York City subway and its six million daily riders—the numbers are just unbelievable—six million daily riders and nine service districts that patrol the city's public housing developments. And while all of those functions, I know, don't fall under Patrol Service Bureau, those 77 precincts and the officers that patrol those precincts most certainly are under your guidance and leadership. So how does the NYPD manage to keep everyone focused on the goal in a department that large?

Pichardo

07:42

Well, you know, it is true that I have the brunt of about 19,000 uniform and civilian members combined. And I think it all comes down to leadership. And at its core, the mission and the goal of every human on this police department—whether you're a civilian member, a traffic agent, a school safety agent, a call taker at the 911 call center, or you're a sworn police officer—the fundamental basis of everything that we do in policing is to keep people safe and protect them. So no matter what position you hold in this police department—that's your mission, that's your focus. We all share the same mission, the same focus, and then at the top, we are currently are... Our police commissioner, Police Commissioner Dermot Shea, someone who I personally admire and respect and the rank and file do so as well, someone who came through the ranks of the police department, commanded several precincts, which is probably the greatest job in the police department. I can certainly attest to that as myself being a precinct commander twice in my tenure in the police department.

So I think like anything else, you know, when you have a phenomenal leader at the top, and you have a group of dedicated employees, regardless of what rank, what title, what position they hold that share that same mission. I think it goes off pretty well. I mean, we have a couple of districts and you mentioned, you know, the transit district and police service areas, and then the precinct dichotomy of having a few "different areas" within the police department. It really doesn't matter because we all mesh, we all work well, we're all one police department. We wear the same patch. There are no boundaries. Whatever we need, we get done collectively as one moving agency.

Donelan

09:24

And, you know, it says a lot too, when you have pride in something, you know? I mean, when you have pride in being a member of NYPD, that's just that right there. I mean, that's half the battle when you have pride in what you do with pride in your department, pride in your community. And I know that you've got more than enough to go around there. Let's take a deeper look at what kind of calls you guys are dealing with. Let's first talk about how many, because I'm still having to digest these numbers. And for our listeners who are from smaller areas of the country, they're going to be lessons that apply to anybody, no matter the size of your department, especially when we start getting into the discussions about the coronavirus, which we're getting ready to. But about NYPD, how many calls for service do you respond to on average every day?

Pichardo

10:06

You know, during this pandemic, it's dropped about 13 percent, but on an average day, right now, we're looking at about fluctuating between 10,000 and 11,000 per day. Prior to this COVID pandemic, we were probably looking at about 12,000 or 13,000 per day, citywide.

Donelan

10:23

You know, you talked about what it was like in the 80s and the 90s. What's it like in 2020? Pre-COVID, pre-coronavirus, what was the predominant type of call that you've been running?

Pichardo

10:33

I mean, it really runs the gamut. There's a lot of "in-progress calls," you know, starting in January, we talk about pre-coronavirus, there was an uptick in robberies. A lot of the calls we were getting were larceny-related calls, both with regular forcible robberies of property and also vehicle thefts were before coronavirus and now during the pandemic still continue to rise through the roof, so to speak. So it's a hybrid of multiple calls of various degrees. Of course, the vehicle collisions you have are 80 cases, but from January—at the beginning of January of this year, up until about March 12th, March 13th—really a lot of the calls were related to larceny-type events, whether they were street robberies, whether they were car larcenies, or reports of car thefts themselves.

Now, during this pandemic, a lot of the calls are really with the burglaries because so many businesses have closed because of the executive orders issued by the governor and the city. I'm sure many folks across the country can relate to that, but we've seen an uptick in those commercial burglaries. And since they're all closed, being broken into. So we have an uptick in those types of calls now.

Donelan

11:42

It's interesting too, you know, the—and I'm going to get into it during COVID and about the type of calls—let's make sure we talk about theft from autos, because that was surprising and because you're not the only department that's dealing with an increase in that. It's just, you think people are home, right? And therefore the cars wouldn't get broken into, but people are still seeing those numbers go up. Let's talk about the beginning of this and what has been somewhat of a unique story for you in New York. The world has been watching, given how active NYPD is and how densely populated the city is. We can only imagine, and again, we watched it—coronavirus presented an overwhelming concern when it hit. You faced a surge in early April up to 20 percent of NYPD officers were out sick? How do you absorb that level of manpower shortage?

Pichardo

12:31

You know, I stated at the beginning of our conversation today that we are well resourced and we have—dare I say to use the word—luxury that many departments across the country may not have and that is that we are in fact, well resourced. And as well-resourced as we are... I mean, at its peak around April 9th, there were over 7,000 officers out sick, over 5,600 with COVID-related illnesses and being COVID positive. And that brought us to about that 20 percent level. Out of those 5,600–5,700, 97 percent of them, over 5,600, have returned back to work. They're healthy and strong and they're out there answering those 911 calls. Six are still in the hospital and we pray for them every day that they continue to get well. But what we did when we saw the numbers increasing and they were fluctuating and as administrative aspects of the city and city government and certainly the police department had to be curtailed and at times shut down, we took some of those folks that were doing that type of assignment and we reallocated to backfill our patrol shrink.

So as the numbers were increasing, we were kind of looking at people that maybe were not doing the jobs that had to get done because the city was closed. For example, the Movie and TV Unit who work hand-in-hand with the Department of Film and Television with the City of New York, well, filming stopped. So there are, we had eight or nine cops that we can take from that unit and put them on patrol in a police car to answer those 911 calls. And we looked across our whole department and everyone stepped up and they stepped up in a big way, went back to basics.

They took this job. They went out into the street. So we were able to balance that and hold off that 20 percent number, we didn't go over that. And slowly and surely on the downturn when April 11th, April 12th came around, all the way down to where we stand today, which is roughly around 2.6 percent of our department is out sick. That's less than 1,000 members and we usually hover around 3 percent. So we're actually doing a little better than what we normally would be at this time.

Donelan

14:42

I'm really glad you gave us that perspective because you're right. That's less than what you were doing on a normal day, that's tremendous. That gives me hope looking at New York because, you know, it's symbol of America. And when we see New York get hit like that, it's just, you know, it's great to hear good news coming finally. If you had to take us back though—because today as we are conducting this interview we are the end of May of 2020—if you had to go back and describe for us what your sort of mental state was when this was really hitting so many unknowns, moving all those pieces around the board, making sure stuff was covered, you know. There was a real fear factor. People were dying and how do you maintain their morale? Because no one was immune to this. Can you go back and just take us through? When you look back at that, how were you doing?

Pichardo

15:39

I think that it's not just the NYPD. I think at the core of every law enforcement officer in every capacity across this great nation of ours—when the bell rings, they step up. They answer that call and in a big way. You look at this country, and certainly here in New York city, we've been through hurricanes—Hurricane Sandy—went through 9/11, as many other parts of the country went through as well, from blackouts and other catastrophic events going on throughout the city. And there's something special about police officers. There's something really, really special that's rooted deep in them that regardless of what goes on, they are resilient and they put aside whatever they have going on in their world. And, listen, our cops, I mean, I gave you those numbers—over 5,000 that were COVID-positive and a few thousand more who had other types of illnesses at that time—and overlay that with, you know, family members that were dying due to COVID, or who were ill, and they couldn't see elderly parents, the problems and concerns that the whole world had. Certainly a lot of people in New York City shared and across this country.

So the resiliency that our police officers had to step up, to know that they were needed now more than ever, I'd say it's unparalleled really. And not because it's New York City, but because of the profession that we have across the country as police officers. That it took this job. They raise their right hand. They swear an oath to protect and serve no matter what. And right now, since March, certainly in New York City, it was the no matter what. And they stepped up in a big way and I couldn't be more proud of the men and women and not just the police officers and I want to make sure that we were mindful of that. It's also our civilian members and it's not just our traffic enforcement agents and our school safety agent who all do a remarkable job.

Think about that call taker—that civilian member who's answering the phone in our dispatch center when somebody calls 911 seeking for help—that person stepped up in a big way. They put their own health aside to show up because they're the lifeline, they're the first line of defense for the victim who's crying out for help. So the magnitude of this illness that's taken and ripped through this country, the

world, certainly our police department, I think we could speak on for days and years to come. But equally, we can talk about the dedication, the professionalism, the profound resilient efforts that our members, both uniformed and civilian alike, displayed. It's truly, truly remarkable.

Donelan

18:09

Chief, you know, you lost 43 NYPD personnel to COVID-19. How do you walk your department and your people through that? They were faithful until death. They paid the ultimate in that effort, as you said, "That resiliency." They paid with their lives. You can't see the virus. It just, you know, you don't know what you're doing. You think you're doing everything right and then you get sick. What type of mental health steps did you have to take as a department to make sure that everybody was okay as that was going through?

Pichardo

18:39

Well, you know, unfortunately, past year and a half, we were well versed in dealing with tragedies within our own police department. It was widely reported, the increase of suicides that we experienced in 2019, losing our uniform officers of all ranks as high as deputy chief who took their own lives. So we rolled out—as we saw the suicides increasing—rolled out a robust program, a peer-support mentoring program where we had volunteers, both uniform and civilian, who signed up and we gave them some of the best training that we could find to be peer supporters in every precinct, in every transit district, and every police service area, in every workplace environment, both in the uniform world and in the civilian world.

So that if someone needed help, if someone was contemplating suicide, if someone was having financial problems, domestic problems—that they had someone that they work with every day, perhaps, that they can trust that they can go to. We have over 250 volunteers who are peer-support members. We have an app on our smartphones that every uniformed employee has and school safety agents have that you can see a plethora of resources on there that if they don't want to go to their coworker or a fellow employee, there's an app there with a number of outside resources that have nothing to do with the New York City Police Department.

We also partnered up through our private partnerships in the Police Foundation, a hospital, a tremendous, tremendous partnership, where they avail themselves to members of this department who were reaching and seeking out for help and said, "Hey, we have some of our best doctors, you can come to us because we all know sometimes in this profession, there's a little bit of a stigma." People are afraid to step forward and let this police department, any police department, sometimes know that, "Hey, I need help," because of fear that they're going to have their guns taken away. They're going to have their shield and badge taken away. They're going to be ostracized by maybe fellow coworkers." So we really revved up those efforts in the end of 2018 and 2019 because of what we were dealing with at that time. And I'm happy to say that I know for a fact a lot of our members have taken advantage of that. And that's a good thing. We need all our people to come forward, to trust us, to let us know, "We need help." Let us do anything that we can do to help you out. So, as we segue between that obviously into

the world, where now in this coronavirus world, we knew that we couldn't stop. We knew that the health and mental wellbeing of our members was going to be astronomical. I mean, we were averaging... civilian deaths throughout the city, sometimes there were 200 a day and our police officers were responding to those.

And now they're being faced with death every single day, sometimes death within their own families. As you alluded, we have lost 43 members—six uniformed, 31 civilian, and six auxiliary, six of those volunteers that I spoke to at the opening. And those are members of our family. And no death is easy to deal with, certainly in our police-department family. But I know many of our members, many of them, were dealing with deaths and illnesses related to COVID in their own families. So continuing to push out the message, continuing to let people know that we're here for them in every aspect of it, figuring out ways how we can open ourselves and any and all resources that we have to them, was really something instrumental that we needed to do for our members.

Donelan

22:04

I really appreciate you talking about the very difficult topic of the suicides, right? Because you're absolutely right. You are in a position where you had a structure. Your department had turned and made a real focus on mental health. So you have that basis as you're moving into something that is going to affect people's mental health in a big way—seeing people dying, people they know in their family—the fact that you had that structure in place because of the horrible and tragic situations with the suicide. I'm glad that you talked about that, you know, it's one of those things we've talked about on the show before—the importance of focusing on wellbeing, mental health. We all know there was a day when you... this wasn't stuff you talked about. This is the job and you just do it right? And the fact the law enforcement family across the country is really, really taking a hard look at that and trying to change the culture. And I'm really glad that you talked about that because that had to have been a huge benefit for you as you moved into another crisis, which was COVID-19. Was there anything that you noticed with the deaths? Was there any job function relation related to those in terms of like, I understand that they, a large number of them worked in traffic enforcement or school safety, or was it just sort of across the board?

Pichardo

23:21

You know, it's really, if you look at what's been said in the medical world and specifically with the CDC and couple their guidelines with those vulnerable populations and the parameters and what they fit, it really kind of fits. Unfortunately and tragically, our deaths kind of align with everything that the medical professionals are saying are most susceptible to this virus. So we continually look at that with our own in-house medical professionals to ensure that that population, that vulnerable population who perhaps has maybe a little higher at risk to contract the virus, that we definitely look out for them now more than ever.

Donelan

24:04

Let's talk about the Patrol Services Bureau and new demands and challenges. So you did talk about moving people who were in units that weren't essential functions during the time of COVID-19. So like you said, "No one's shooting movies right now." Were there any other demands or challenges that presented themselves that you had to tackle beyond the people getting sick?

Pichardo

24:28

Certainly, there were. We still had to deal with traditional crime, right? Just because people were not out as much, if the clubs were closed and some bars may have been closed, if they didn't sell any food yet, the larcenies and the identity theft and credit-card fraud crimes, and the larcenies from commercial establishment, specifically clothing stores, all those nonessential businesses, if you will—we'll see the decrease in crime in those categories. But as I alluded to before, as those nonessential businesses, you know, commercial establishments closed were burglarized, because unfortunately there were some miscreants out in the world and think about that. Taking advantage of the most vulnerable people in this city at a time when the world is hurting, where they close down these businesses, and now they have to come back to their business and be in essence revictimized because their establishment was broken into. So you take that and we still saw an uptick in shootings and murders because gang members—folks that were let out of the city jail system and the state jail system early because of these COVID-related illnesses and things that were going on in the criminal justice world—were out there. And they were out there shooting and committing crimes. So we pivot to traditional crime, we pivot to the shootings and the homicides, and we're still in that world. We have some pockets all throughout the city where we have some serious, serious gang violence involving really, really bad people. Some that have been let out of jail and involved in some violence and some that were on parole and should probably be back in jail, quite frankly, to make sure that the good people of this city are safe.

Donelan

26:10

That topic of the early release and trying to thin-out the jails a little bit to stop the spread of COVID-19, that's something law enforcement agencies had to face across the country. And people may tend to want to say, "Oh, it was fine," but I think we have to talk about the reality of what it was and where it worked and where it didn't work and how it worked and how it didn't work. Because the reality of it is we are not at the finish line by any stretch of the imagination. And depending on which expert you listen to, you know, we could be looking at a second wave. A second wave that could potentially be worse than the first. Everybody's battle weary right now. What do you learn from what we've been through? How do you prepare yourself if it happens again? And what are some of the lessons that you think are important for the listeners to hear as they Monday-quarterback what they just did and perhaps plan for what could be another wave?

Pichardo

27:04

I really want to just circle back to the point about the prison population and those release of inmates. And so I want to make sure that I'm very clear on something: I am not saying that everyone should be locked up and no one should be released. We can all agree to that, I think, especially in our profession. If you look at our police department this year alone, we've made approximately 28,000 less arrests compared to last year. And that's just in the first five months of this year. Less than 28,000 people that we put in jail, right? And I would agree that if there's someone who has 10 days left on their sentence, that perhaps maybe considering that, then maybe we should release that person if we will look at all the variables tied into it so that they don't get ill behind the correction system, right?

So I'm in agreement with one aspect of it. And then the problem that I certainly have is when we have prolific career criminals who will have a propensity for violence. I mean, there was an individual that was released, who was arrested on a number of sexual offense charges, and within the first couple of weeks that he was released, he raped a woman. That person should have never been released and now hopefully he never gets released, right? So we look at that now to go to your point about lessons learned. I will say this: I think that it is critical for anyone... I think with everything and I think you will really appreciate this portion of what I'm about to say, that it is really the messaging piece. Messaging, messaging, messaging is so critical. And I'll start off with the messaging piece internally with our very own employees.

I think we did a pretty good job between having a special app, between sending messages, between the police commissioner hosting social media forums so our members can ask him questions, the availability of that, a special banner that comes on when they turn on their department computers. But I think we can always do more. I think that relaying the information on a daily basis—and even until now, I'm on daily calls with our police commissioner at the highest levels—and we want that to trickle down all the way to the sort of troops to men and women out in the street, doing the job every single day. But I think every aspect, if I would say across the board, I think messaging is the most critical piece, both where we are as an agency, what we're seeing, what the plan is, what we're doing. So I think we did a really good job with it, but I think we can always do better and I think that's what's great about this organization, that no one sits back and say, tap themselves on their shoulder and on their back. and say, "Hey, rah, rah, I did great."

We all strive. We did okay, but we all strive to do better. And in this profession, as long as we have individuals and I'm not speaking about me, I'm talking about the over 55,000 employees that we have—I know they are striving to do better and that's how we move forward. And that's how in this profession we continue to do well and look out for each other and protect the people of this great city.

Donelan

30:01

Well, it's called humility, right? I think the people that think they know everything are the ones that set themselves up for failure. I think you have to be open and honest and pliable. I've been sitting here nodding my head, like a bobble-head. We were going over the messaging piece, especially the internal

communication, because that is so key, especially for your morale, just communications, communications, communications. So of course, yes, I'm completely with you. And I do think COVID-19 forced every agency in public safety to take a hard look at their communications. People were going virtual for the first time ever. How many Zoom calls were you on in the last 60 days?

Pichardo

30:39

Too many.

Donelan

30:42

Yep. You probably... now did you buy lighting for yourself?

Pichardo

30:46

No, but I got a couple of wardrobe and makeup people, that's for sure.

Donelan

30:50

Okay, Alright, alright.

Pichardo

30:53

I need all the help I can get there and they still didn't make me look good.

Donelan

30:58

I'm telling you the lights they sell at Amazon, they're phenomenal. Let's talk about actual—and you've touched on this a little bit, but I want to talk about this a little bit more—the types of crime. I know that you were talking about the larcenies, et cetera. Domestic violence, I know was a big one for a lot of folks. People were at home together for an extended period of time unlike any other. Was that a concern for you? Was that a number you saw spike up? Did you see that one coming? How'd you handle that?

Pichardo

31:26

Well, that is probably a population that I'm really, really concerned with. I think as the city here continues the process of opening up in the next couple of weeks and hopefully into the summer, I think we're going to see a really, really sharp increase in domestic violence calls, in domestic violence incidents. And simply because of this. If someone is a victim of domestic violence and now they're being told, so to speak, that they have to kind of cohabitate and stay there with that individual because the person has to work from home, or because the person was laid off or fired, because no one can be out in the street. I think that we lost. A number of people are afraid to come forward because what ends up

happening is they're going to call 911, we will respond, we will make an arrest, but as we know, because of the virus throughout the city, our District Attorney's court is not in session by and large, especially for some of the most serious and egregious crimes that they're holding special court, but grand juries haven't been convened, you know?

So I think we have, unfortunately, a lot of domestic violence survivors who cannot come forward right now because they're in a position at home where if they come forward, they may put themselves really in harm's way. And that goes across the board for children as well. And we've been doing outreach. We've been calling the households, we've been sending, you know, just informational flyers. We have crime victims assistant programs in every precinct through the city. We have Safe Horizon advocates in every precinct. And we have lists of some of our most vulnerable domestic violence survivors that we want to make sure we keep in contact with them just to check up on them. So I think we're going to see an increase, unfortunately, in domestic violence calls and incidents, as the weather warms up and as people come back to work and the city opens up and we're going to do everything we can to get the help to those domestic violence survivors and their loved ones.

Donelan

33:24

It does make you shudder. I'm sure that keeps you up at night. I know it keeps law enforcement up at night across the country. One of the challenges early on was the question of how to enforce these stay-at-home orders without infringing and listening to what the, you know, the other side that was complaining about this. And just trying to make sure that you are walking that line, right? How did you do that?

Pichardo

33:47

You know, I wish we, as an agency, I would love to take credit for it, but we can't. It truly has been the remarkable people that make up this city, the over 8.6 million New Yorkers. They have heeded the advice of all the medical professionals, certainly our mayor, our police commissioner, the advocates, our elected officials across the board—to stay home as much as they can. Come in and go through the park, get a workout in, and go back home. Obviously with only essential businesses open—come in, do your grocery shopping, and head back home. So really the credit is due to every New Yorker that through this remarkable moment in history, they too have stepped up. They too, in a way, have made life easier for us as the law enforcement agency in one of many but certainly a premier one in terms of responsibility for the City of New York, made our jobs a little easier because the overwhelming amount of New Yorkers have been extremely, extremely cooperative in everything that they have done and in everything that we have asked them to do at times.

So the credit is really due to every New Yorker and it is really, really appreciated. And it's not over yet. We still need everyone to hang in there. We're certainly in a better place from where we were, you know, in early April, but there's work to be done. We need to make sure that that's the messaging piece, that we're not out of the woods yet. There's work to be done and we're going to ask for their support as we move forward.

Donelan

35:22

Is that the real challenge that you're facing now in May of 2020, just the fatigue? People wanting to return to normal? Are you facing that at all? Or are people still being pretty strict about everything and understanding?

Pichardo

35:35

You know, I think we're all fatigued in one way, shape, or form. But I think we all accept and acknowledge the tragedies, that horrible number of deaths in our city that have been attributed to COVID. And I think that because of the awareness that we have in this city of the impact that it's had on our residents and our family, one city collectively, I think that we have not lost sight of that. I think New Yorkers have not lost sight of that. So even though the weather is turning nicer and it's breaking and people want to come out, I think they're respectful of the notion that they need to continue to take all those precautionary measures: washing their hands and wearing a face covering and not gathering in groups and partying and coming out, do their exercise, do their grocery shopping, and go back home.

So I think they're doing it. And I think if we all collectively hang in there just a little while longer, I don't know what the new normal is going to look like, but I can tell you that we'll be in a safer place if we keep moving in this direction.

Donelan

36:37

Speaking of new normals, so the virus has resulted in tremendous change. We've seen it across society, entire business sectors have learned how to rethink how they work. We've learned how to work remote. You've learned how to get hair and makeup for your Zoom calls now. Social distancing is working, you know. That will likely remain in place for a foreseeable future at least. Have there been any lessons that you think that, or changes in policies that you think might actually stick moving forward, even when we go back to life without COVID, that you have found as an agency works better as a result of this that you learned through this?

Pichardo

37:18

I think anyone who doesn't take a really good and hard look at themselves and their agency is doing really a disservice to their employees, themselves, the organization at large, whether it's taking a look at teleworking and what we can do in that aspect. And really, first and foremost I'd say, the landscape of protecting our employees. You know, we have thermal screening at every single facility, including our headquarters here, where every single person—and not just police, civilian, or uniformed employees—every single person, if someone's walking into a police precinct today to file some sort of report or inquire about something, that person is going to have the temperature read by a police officer before they enter that facility. So looking at the landscape of where we are today as an agency, from where we

were, I think we will continue to look at ourselves. I think it's a good moment in time to look at what we can do better, more efficiently perhaps in terms of resources and really overall protecting the wellbeing and the health of our employees.

Donelan

38:20

I can't thank you enough for joining us. I think that you dropped so many gems. I think people are going to walk away from this with something. Chief, if someone wanted to reach you, how could they reach you?

Pichardo

38:31

They can hit me up on Twitter. I'm on social media @NYPDchiefpatrol. They can certainly call at headquarters, my number is listed, or certainly they can always go through our press office at the Deputy Commissioner of Public Information. They have 24/7 access to me.

Donelan

38:47

Chief, thank you so much. We are rooting for you, we are cheering for NYPD, we are cheering for New York. You are in our thoughts and best of luck as we move forward with this.

Pichardo

38:57

Thank you. Thank you for having me and really for giving us this forum. And it's important to know that we have learned a lot from our fellow law enforcement agencies across this country. As I get on conference calls with them occasionally once a week to hear what they're dealing with. So I just want to be clear that this is not a New York City Police Department platform. This is a countrywide, joint law enforcement effort from every agency, whether they're a three-person police department or a 55,000-person police department. I want to thank every single law enforcement agency across this country for everything that they do, and for all their thoughts and prayers.

Donelan

39:37

You have their gratitude. Thank you so much. And thank you everyone for joining us on *The Beat*.

Voiceover: *The Beat* Exit

39:43

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Voiceover: Disclaimer

40:40

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