



## MTA Press Releases

[Select Language](#) ▼

Press Release

October 29, 2008

[Bridges & Tunnels](#)

IMMEDIATE

### Man at the Helm: Verrazano-Narrows Bridge General Manager James Ferrara

There's no such thing as an ordinary work day for Jim Ferrara, General Manager of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, which links Staten Island to Brooklyn and the rest of New York City and is the MTA's most traveled crossing with 190,000 trips per day.

"The Verrazano is a bridge and then some," says Jim Ferrara. "We link two busy New York City boroughs and serve as a connection to major highways, we've got two levels with 12 lanes of traffic, a toll plaza with 30 lanes, almost 10,000 feet of roadway to care for, we're the starting point for the NYC Marathon—and those are just the basics. We've even been known to play host to a family of falcons atop one of our towers."

Ferrara, a Brooklyn native who now resides in Queens, prides himself and his staff on customer service: "Each employee's interaction with each customer is a reflection of all of us, so courtesy and professionalism are the order of the day at the 'V-N.'" Ferrara says he has plenty of support in this respect, with the 131 Bridge and Tunnel Officers, Sergeants and Lieutenants, and maintenance workers for whom he's responsible. Ferrara also cites his management staff, notably Operations Superintendent Daniel DeCrescenzo and Maintenance Superintendent William McCann, for their efficiency and agency-wide experience. The bridge also has an engineering staff under the direction of Facility Engineer David Riggs.

If anyone is equipped to handle the diverse duties associated with the bridge, it's Ferrara, who began his career with MTA in 1977 as a Bridge and Tunnel Officer at the Triborough Bridge. Working in various capacities at all the agency's seven bridges and two tunnels, Ferrara moved through the ranks of Sergeant, Lieutenant then to management; by 2001 he was Operations Superintendent at the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel—but another test of his mettle was yet to come.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, Ferrara was attending to his daily routine as Operations Superintendent at the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel; the General Manager was on vacation and he was in charge. The tragic events that followed are well documented, but Ferrara's extraordinary management of the tunnel and its employees, shepherding of emergency response vehicles to the site, and assistance to stranded motorists and those who fled on foot through the tunnel when the towers fell set him apart. His command of the chaotic situation in and around the tunnel on both sides cemented his reputation as a respected leader in crisis. In the months that followed, the tunnel was closed to public traffic and continued to serve the critical role in providing access for the steady stream of construction and service vehicles bound for the site and transporting debris out of Ground Zero.

Among Ferrara's memorable experiences since becoming General Manager of the Verrazano in November 2006 has been watching the start of the New York City Marathon on the bridge after months of careful preparation. "It's especially moving to see the disabled athletes at the starting line of the Marathon. Their enthusiasm to compete in the event is inspiring," he said.

On November 2nd this year, the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge will once again serve as the starting line for nearly 40,000 runners. The annual event places the bridge under the international spotlight, but also requires enormous time and effort behind the scenes on the part of Ferrara and his staff. Security issues, crowd management, roadway prep and post-race clean-up go into the planning, but come race-day, the effort pays off.

Ferrara's maintenance and operations crews, under the direction of McCann and DeCrescenzo, respectively, work diligently to ensure the bridge is ready for the day's action, especially the massive crowds at the starting line. Roadways are scoured by sweeper trucks. Expansion joints that enable flexibility of the span for temperature changes are covered so runners won't stumble in the spaces between them. Trucks and barricades must be stationed at off-and-on-ramps to prevent runners from veering from the course. Hundreds of traffic cones require placement to section off the Marathon activities—but not until the hundreds of orange plastic cylinder "delineators" that mark traffic lanes are first removed. The logistics are reversed right after the last runner has passed, and then there's the clean-up, which includes picking up piles and pounds of discarded warm-up clothes all over the bridge and roadway. All the tasks are completed with efficient speed so the bridge can reopen to customers as soon as possible Sunday afternoon.

On Marathon Sunday or any day, General Manager Ferrara never tires of looking up at the two 693-foot high towers, the monumental sight of which greets all who enter New York Bay through the Narrows and under the bridge, sailboats and great ships alike. There's also a skyline show every night as the bridge's 262 necklace lights are turned on.

Says Ferrara, "This is the most interesting, challenging, at times frustrating, but altogether rewarding job I could ever imagine."

The Verrazano-Narrows Bridge opened to motorists on November 21, 1964.

MTA Bridges and Tunnels' facilities, which connect the five boroughs of New York City, are the Triborough, Throgs Neck, Bronx-Whitestone, Henry Hudson, Verrazano-Narrows, Cross Bay Veterans Memorial and Marine Parkway-Gil Hodges Bridges, and the Queens Midtown and Brooklyn-Battery Tunnels.



---

*Photo caption: Jim Ferrara, General Manager of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge.*