



MTA Press Releases

[Select Language](#) | ▼

Press Release

July 30, 2014

[Bridges & Tunnels](#)

IMMEDIATE

MTA Bridge and Tunnel Officers Rescue Families From Fire

Two Officers Injured While Evacuating Apartments

Quick action by Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Bridge and Tunnel Officers saved more than a dozen people from a raging fire in a four-story apartment building near the Queens Midtown Tunnel this morning.

No civilian injuries were reported in the two-alarm fire, which broke out shortly after 6:30 a.m. at 10-39 51st Ave. in Long Island City, Queens. Bridge and Tunnel Officers Joseph Vasquez and Ronald Linck were injured while evacuating residents from the building and were taken to Bellevue Hospital for treatment of cuts, bruises and smoke inhalation. The Fire Department reported five firefighters also suffered various injuries.

"We saw heavy flames and smoke as we approached, and we started knocking on doors and kicking doors to get the people out," said Bridge and Tunnel Sgt. Kris Owens. "Everybody seemed to be sleeping and disoriented, and some people came out in their nightclothes. Within a few minutes we had the building cleared. We got everybody out safely. I'm glad we were there."

Owens and Sgt. Paul Leggio were preparing for a security checkpoint at the Queens Midtown Tunnel administration building when they noticed flames and smoke at the rear of the apartment building two doors away.

Leggio kicked in the front door to begin rousing residents, followed quickly by Owens, Vasquez, Linck, Sgt. Jacinth Thomas and officers Steven Wall, Dave Rivera and James McGuigan. After safely bringing everyone out of the building, they also evacuated residents from the apartment buildings on both sides of the fire.

"Our Bridge and Tunnel Officers work around the clock to protect our customers from hazards of vehicular traffic, but when they saw lives at risk off our property, these brave officers did not hesitate to plunge into danger to save them," said MTA Chairman and CEO Thomas F. Prendergast. "I'm proud of their selfless actions to protect the public."