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# Firefighters To Call For Reopening of Fire Companies

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Firefighters plan a three-borough caravan today to call for the reopening of six shuttered fire units and to charge the city with giving misleading information on recent response times to emergencies.



The most egregious case of misleading response times was for the Cobble Hill neighborhood once served by Engine Co. 204 on Degraw Street in Brooklyn, the two firefighter unions said Monday.

While the Fire Department claimed last month that response times in Cobble Hill increased by 47 seconds, department data showed the response time was two minutes and eight seconds longer, the unions claimed.

The response time has increased in all six neighborhoods served by the closed companies, four in Brooklyn, one in Queens and one in Manhattan, the unions said.

"They're mixing apples and oranges here," Fire Department spokesman Frank Gribbon said Monday night. "What we said was we expected average response times in the areas where the six companies were closed to go up by about a minute. Those were projections based on computer modeling."

"In the end, the department found that it actually went up an average of about 20 seconds in the first two months, compared to the same period a year earlier," Gribbon said.

"The average increase for the six companies was one minute and seven seconds and the two minutes and eight second increase for Cobble Hill goes far beyond acceptable fire coverage limits," Peter Gorman, president of the Uniformed Fire Officers Association, said in a statement to be released Tuesday.

Stephen Cassidy, president of the rank-and-file Uniformed Firefighters Association, said the Fire Department had misled the City Council during public hearings on June 5 on the closings.

He said Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta had given statistics to the council on June 5 that were based on average response times.

But when it sought to justify the closing last month, it released statistics comparing June and July of last year to June and July of this year, not the "historical data" figures they had provided to the council.

"Prior to the engine company closings the FDNY seriously misled the City Council about response times in the six affected communities," Cassidy said in his statement. "The increases soared in all six neighborhoods. ... ," he said.