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# Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island *News*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Safety improvements for Statue of Liberty planned**

**New York, NY** – The National Park Service (NPS) is in the planning stages of improving visitor safety to the Statue of Liberty that will include alterations to the staircases in the pedestal, upgrades to the fire suppression system, changes to the HVAC system, two new means of exiting the monument and a “fire break” between the Statue itself and the pedestal.

“Life safety changes to the pedestal and base have been planned since the NPS announced that it would re-open the Statue in 2009,” said Mindi Rambo, spokeswoman for the National Park Service. “The process for approving changes to historic structures like Statue of Liberty National Monument is a detailed one that takes time, so we went ahead and made the Statue as accessible as we could in 2009, while acknowledging at the time that more changes would need to be made starting in the fall of 2011.”

On Friday, Aug. 13, the NPS will release its Environmental Assessment and Assessment of Effect on the proposed life safety changes at Statue of Liberty National Monument and take public comment on the proposed alternatives through Sept. 13. It is the first of several steps that the park is required to take before making changes of this proposed magnitude, and until the entire planning process is complete, it is not possible to accurately estimate construction costs.

The principal changes will be to the pedestal. Current fire code mandates that there be two separated means of egress so that, in the event one path out is compromised, a safe means of exiting the structure is available. At least one staircase also has to have a two-hour fire rating, meaning that visitors would have two hours to evacuate. In order to meet this code, at least one staircase has to be encapsulated and the interior space conditioned. The present staircases in the Monument will not allow for this. These changes, together with the other planned safety improvements, are expected to enable the park to increase visitation to the crown and improve visitor safety overall.

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“When the work begins, visitors will still be able to visit Liberty Island during construction,” said David Luchsinger, Superintendent of Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island. “The park will be providing increased Ranger-led tours and other programs on the Island as well. While we are anticipating that the Monument itself will be closed during construction, it is still too early in the planning process to speculate on the degree or duration of such a closure.”

***About Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island***

Located on a 12-acre island in New York Harbor, the Statue, *Liberty Enlightening the World*, was a gift of friendship from the people of France to the people of the United States and is a universal symbol of freedom and democracy. The Statue of Liberty was dedicated on October 28, 1886, designated as a National Monument in 1924 and restored for her centennial on July 4, 1986.

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