NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

Marathon will close V-N Bridge

■ In the past, Brooklyn-bound lower level had remained open

By MICHAEL WAGNER
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

For the first time ever, the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge will be closed to traffic in both directions on Sunday, when thousands of runners make their way across the majestic two-mile span for the first leg of the New York City Marathon.

Bridge officials made the decision last week during a planning meeting for the world-renowned marathon, which starts each year in Fort Wadsworth and winds its way through all five boroughs.

Frank Pascual, a Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Bridges and Tunnels spokesman, said the Police Department ordered the agency to close the span to traffic during the run. He wouldn't comment on why, but said it had to do with heightened security concerns in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

Police officials did not return phone calls for comment.

In previous years, the bridge has always been closed Staten Island-

PLEASE SEE BRIDGE, PAGE A 6

CITY_21MC100_011832120

NYC-WTC_000414224

NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

Bridge

FROM PAGE A 1

bound, but the Brooklyn-bound lower deck remained open, although drivers had to endure heavy traffic.

This year, the bottom deck Brooklyn-bound will be closed from 10 a.m. to noon. The bottom deck Staten Island-bound will close at 8 a.m., over an hour earlier than in past marathons, and will reopen around 1:45 p.m.

"It all depends on how much clothing people throw around and how much cleaning up we have to do," Pascual said, referring to when the roadway would be reopened.

The top deck will be closed in both directions for most of the day, from midnight Saturday to 3 p.m. Sunday. The runners themselves cross on the upper level of the bridge, creating one of the most striking images of the annual November event.

The early-morning closure allows marathon staffers to sweep and clean the deck, lay down starter markings and generally prepare the route for the flood of runners.

In addition to the new traffic restrictions, Pascual said cars or trucks carrying hazardous materials will also be prohibited from crossing the bridge while the upper level remains closed.

Drivers are advised to avoid the bridge if possible. Traffic backups — even when the lower level is open — are inevitable.

Because cars are still not allowed on the Staten Island Ferry, the bridge closures increase the difficulty for drivers traveling to and from the borough.

The Coast Guard and MTA police have maintained extra-tight security on the Verrazano in the weeks since Sept. 11, mainly because it's the longest bridge in the city and marks the entrance to New York Harbor.

CITY_21MC100_011832121

NYC-WTC_000414225