TRUE ELEMENTS®

WATER INTELLIGENCE EVENT SUMMARY · SEPTEMBER 2026 • ISSUE 004

NEW YORK CITY AND THE TRI-STATE REGION

NYC Tri-State Nor'easter Flood and Water-Quality Event



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New York City and the Tri-State Region of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut · September 25–28, 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Quiet Rivers, Exposed Waterfronts

From September 25 to 28, 2026, a nor'easter brought steady rain to New York City and the Tri-State Region of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. A nor'easter is a strong coastal storm with winds from the northeast. True Elements' TrueQi™ Water Intelligence System, supported by Argus™, examined the storm using 12 public map layers. The investigation covered five places: New York City, Newark, Trenton, Long Island and Hartford.

The rain itself was moderate. Estimated rainfall around New York City was about 0.75 to 1.5 inches. During the one observation session, no river gauge and no river forecast that was viewed showed a river nearing or reaching flood stage.

The stronger signal came from maps and models of risk. Areas at high risk from storm surge (seawater pushed onto land by wind) line up with official FEMA flood zones. Those same low-lying harbor, bay and tidal-river areas also have polluted waters and nearby contaminated sites. This overlap is strongest around:

- New York Harbor and Newark Bay

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- the Hackensack and Passaic rivers and the Meadowlands
- Newtown Creek
- the South Bronx waterfront

True Elements assessed the event as a compound flood and contamination-risk event. In other words, flooding risk and pollution risk sit in the same places. This is an assessment of exposure, meaning where harm could happen. It does not document harm that did happen. No flooding depth, sewer overflow, pollution release or damage was observed.

Timing is the biggest open question. All readings came from a single session, and their times were not recorded. That session therefore cannot be compared with the storm's peak.

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS

Five Findings in Plain Language

RAINFALL **About 0.75–1.5 inches**	**Estimated rain around New York City was moderate. No total in the city view went above 2 inches.** This is not extreme rain. It can still overload city streets, drains and older combined sewers. Rainfall was reported for the New York City area only.
RIVER LEVELS **No gauge at Action or flood stage**	**Every gauge viewed read normal or below normal. No river forecast showed flooding.** Rivers were not flooding while they were viewed. That is not an all-clear. The session may have missed the peak, or impacts may have come from the coast rather than from rivers.
SURGE AND FLOOD ZONES **Highest-risk red and orange zones**	**Modeled storm-surge risk and FEMA flood zones point to the same tidal corridors.** Risk is highest around Hoboken, Jersey City, the Meadowlands, Newark and the Ironbound. Small creeks and tidal drains carry that exposure inland. These maps show risk, not where water actually went.

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POLLUTED WATERS AND SITES

3 Superfund site areas

The waters in these exposed corridors are already polluted. Three areas with Superfund sites sit in or beside high surge-risk zones.

The three areas are Newtown Creek, Newark's Ironbound by the Passaic River and Newark Bay, and Port Morris in the South Bronx. Any runoff or surge would reach waters that are already degraded. No release was observed, so these are priorities for review and sampling.

WHAT IS STILL UNKNOWN

Timing unresolved

Reading times were not recorded. The Long Island Sound coast was not assessed. Tide gauges and beach data were not reviewed.

What actually flooded or overflowed remains unknown. Answering that requires tide records, official rainfall totals, water sampling and field checks.

TRUSTED PUBLIC DATA

The Evidence Behind the Assessment

The investigation used public layers from federal agencies, plus True Elements' own modeled water-quality score. Each layer is a different kind of evidence:

- Observed layers record what was measured.
- Forecast layers show what is expected.
- Mapped layers show official zones and locations.
- Modeled layers show estimated risk.

Only the observed layers describe what happened during this storm.

Table 1. Public data layers examined and what each can support

SOURCE	WHO PROVIDES IT	WHAT IT TELLS US
Rainfall estimate (QPE, "Today" period)	NOAA / National Weather Service	Observed estimate of how much rain fell. It may not cover the full four-day storm.
Live stream gauges	U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)	Observed river flow. Every gauge viewed read normal or below normal.
River gauges and river flood forecasts	NOAA / National Weather Service	Observed flood category and forecast flood severity. No flooding was shown.
Coastal storm surge risk	Agency not identified in the source package	Modeled zones where seawater could push inland. Shows risk, not this storm's water levels.

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SOURCE	WHO PROVIDES IT	WHAT IT TELLS US
National Flood Hazard Layer	Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	Mapped official flood zones. Not the area that actually flooded.
Hydrography and 3D hydrography	USGS	Mapped creeks, channels and drainage paths that can carry water inland.
ATTAINS impaired waters	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Mapped waters the EPA lists as impaired, meaning they were already assessed as having water-quality problems.
Superfund sites	EPA	Mapped locations of sites on the national list of seriously contaminated land.
Groundwater nitrate assessment	USGS	Modeled chance of nitrate in groundwater. Not a storm-specific or drinking-water test.
TrueQi™ Surface Water Quality Score	True Elements	Modeled water-quality grid. Not a regulatory measurement.
New York and New Jersey beach layers	Agency not identified in the source package	No usable data, so recreational-water conditions are unknown.

Layers read during a single observation session in September 2026; reading times were not captured. Several map legends could not be fully read, so exact color thresholds are unconfirmed.

HOW TRUEQI™ AND ARGUS™ CONNECT THE EVIDENCE

From Separate Maps to One Picture

01 1. GATHER

Public layers on rain, rivers, surge, flood zones, water quality and contaminated sites were read for five places in one observation session.

02 2. SORT THE EVIDENCE

Each layer was labeled as observed, forecast, mapped or modeled, so risk maps are not mistaken for actual flooding.

03 3. COMPARE

Argus™ helped organize and compare the layers to find where they agree. Here, surge risk, flood zones, polluted waters and contaminated sites overlapped in the same tidal corridors.

04 4. INTERPRET AND FLAG GAPS

True Elements ranked the areas of greatest concern. It also recorded what the evidence cannot show: timing, tide records, sampling results and actual damage. Interpretations remain subject to human expert review.

WHY THIS MATTERS

One Gauge Can Look Like an All-Clear

Viewed one layer at a time, this storm looks ordinary: moderate rain, calm river gauges and no river flood forecast. A reader could easily decide there was nothing to worry about.

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Viewed together, the layers tell a different story. Many of the places most exposed to storm surge and flooding are also the places with polluted waters, contaminated land, and dense roads, rail and industry. In those areas, even moderate rain or a small surge could carry pollution into nearby water.

> **"The region's greatest risks emerge where flooding and water-quality degradation overlap."**

Connecting trusted sources does not replace tide records, water sampling or field inspection. It shows where those checks would tell us the most, and why.

OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

A Warning Signal, Not an All-Clear

The evidence shows two things. First, the nor'easter brought moderate rain without river flooding at the gauges that were viewed. Second, the region's mapped and modeled flood risk is concentrated in harbor, bay and tidal-river corridors whose waters are already degraded.

Based on how strongly the layers overlap, True Elements ranked five areas of concern:

1. the Harbor–Newark Bay–Meadowlands system, from Hoboken and Jersey City to Newark and the Ironbound
2. Newtown Creek and the Brooklyn–Queens waterfront
3. the South Bronx waterfront, especially Port Morris
4. Long Island's tidal corridors
5. the Connecticut River corridor, along with the Long Island Sound shoreline, which was not assessed

This ranking reflects mapped and modeled overlap, not observed impact. Trenton's mapped floodplain still matters for heavier storms.

For responsible agencies, the findings point to useful questions rather than directives:

- whether flood-prone transit, drainage and electrical assets should be inspected
- whether sewer overflows reached impaired waters
- whether contaminated waterfront sites were disturbed
- where direct water sampling would show actual conditions

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Public messaging can also explain that "no river flood stage" does not mean "no hazard." Decisions rest with responsible agencies and qualified professionals.

> OPERATIONAL TAKEAWAY
>
> No flooding depth, sewer overflow, pollution release or damage was observed. The readings came from one session with no recorded times, so it is unknown whether they captured the storm's peak. Tide records, official rainfall totals, beach data, water sampling and field inspection are needed to establish what actually happened.

READ THE FULL REPORT

The complete evidence, sources and limitations

The full Water Intelligence Event Report for Issue 004 documents every data layer, measurement, qualification and source behind this Summary.

Full Report: trueelements.com/water-intelligence-series/#issue-004

ABOUT TRUE ELEMENTS

True Elements is a water intelligence company. Its TrueQi™ Water Intelligence System, supported by Argus™, connects trusted public water, weather and hazard data into a traceable operating picture for consequential decisions.

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