05/28/2019

**Notes on 05/28/2019 MOPD: Disaster Resilience & Resource Network Quarterly Meeting – Hazard Mitigation & Agency Updates**

# Introductions

The MOPD Disaster Resilience and Resource Network “Network” met on May 28, 2019. During this meeting MOPD Assistant General Counsel Eli Fresquez provided welcome remarks and updated the Network on the programs and events MOPD has been working on. Today’s meeting focused on disaster preparedness and the City’s 2019 Heat Plan.

Participants included:

* Eli Fresquez, Assistant General Counsel, NYC Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD)
* Marcie Roth, CEO, Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies and Former Director, Office of Disability Integration & Coordination, FEMA
* Andrew Perlman, Chair of the Animal Planning Task Force, NYC Emergency Management (NYCEM)
* Chris Pagnotta, Program Manager, NYC Emergency Management (NYCEM)
* Munerah Ahmed, Director, Climate and Health Project, NYC Health Department and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)

## Marcie Roth, CEO, Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies, discussed the Partnership and the REAADI in Disasters Act

* Marcie Roth is the former Director of the Office of Disability Integration at FEMA. She helped to develop that program and continues to be a national leader in disability access and functional needs in management.
* The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies (“The Partnership”) represents the 61 million American adults living with disabilities as well as the additional 3 million children with disabilities across the United States.
* The Partnership is the only organization in the United States that has a full-time mission focusing on disability and disaster and is also heavily involved in global disability initiatives.
* The Partnership’s mission is to provide equal access to emergency programs and services as well as, full inclusion before, during, and after disasters. The Partnership’s many services include a 24-hour/7-days a week hotline, which has already helped close to 5,000 people who have been impacted by disasters in the last two years.
* The Partnership is staffed by a number of highly-skilled and knowledgeable team members who are very experienced with both local disability resources, the various local and state emergency management processes and also the complexities of FEMA, HHS and other federal disaster related programs and services.
* The Partnership also has a response team that deploys into disasters. The response team’s goals are to support disability organizations and local disability-led organizations on the ground.
* The response team is only deployed when those local disability organizations have been so impacted that they need outside assistance. For example, during both Hurricanes Maria and Irma, the Partnership deployed its response team. However, in other instances of recent disasters, the response team has supported these local disability organizations remotely through its many resources.
* The Partnership also has a national stakeholder call, which is typically comprised of 30 to 50 disability and emergency management partners in the local, state and federal levels. The partners come together on a weekly basis and during times of disaster, those phone calls occur on a daily basis, where needed.
* The Partnership has a number of publications. Preserving Our Freedom: Ending Institutionalization of People with Disabilities, was released on Friday, May 24, in Puerto Rico. The National Council on Disability contracted with the Partnership to develop this report and it will be delivered to the President and Congress.
* The Partnership has also published two other notable publications. One is an e-learning comprehensive training course on disability disaster risk reduction. It is primarily focused outside of the United States, Asia and the Pacific, but in it, people will be able to find training modules and other materials which are relevant to the preparedness response recovery mitigation issues here in the United States.
* The other notable publication is an after action report that the Partnership completed about a year ago. The publication has sparked a number of additional efforts between the National Council on Disabilities report that was released on May 24 and the Partnership’s 2018 after-action report.
* There are two bills being introduced in Congress by Senator Bob Casey of Pennsylvania. Information on both bills will be updated on the [REAADI.com](https://reaadi.com/) website as it becomes available. The Partnership is seeking organizational support to demonstrate a large national disability public health emergency shared interest in the passage of the bills.
* The Disaster Relief Medicaid Act focuses on the continuity portability of Medicaid for people who are eligible for Medicaid but who have had to evacuate out-of-state in a disaster. The bill will ensure that when people are evacuated from a state where there’s less support, they will receive the support that is available in a host state. Also, if they evacuate from a state with better Medicaid support, they will be able to keep the better Medicaid support in the host state.
* The REAADI in Disaster Act focuses on five things.
  + One, regional training and technical assistance for disability inclusive emergency management.
  + Two, a research component, which would fund good and promising practices to facilities for preparedness response and recovery.
  + Three, the establishment of a national commission on disability rights and disasters.
  + Four, a Department of Justice review of non-compliance settlement agreements, dating back to Hurricane Katrina, to make sure that all emergency-related elements have in fact been executed. Lastly, a governmental accountability investigation into the funds that have been allocated and dispensed to ensure compliance with the Rehabilitation Act requirements.

# MOPD’s Summer Updates

* The Disability Pride Parade at the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) will be held on July 14.
* The NYC: ATWORK program is one of MOPD’s most important programs. This programs works with state and local governments, private companies, and small businesses, employing people with disabilities.
* It is really important, especially in the emergency management field to have people with disabilities in leadership roles, whether it’s in state and local governments, FEMA, and also in university settings. The office is looking at campus inclusion efforts, considering working with hospitals and much more.
* Last week, the New York City Digital Inclusion Conference was held. Walei Sabry, NYC’s Digital Accessibility Coordinator helped work with the Mayor’s Office on this event. If you’d like more information about the conference and some of the tool kits that were provided, please contact Eli.
* Earlier in the month, the Mayor’s Office hosted the “National Convening of Municipal Leaders Focused on Persons with Disabilities.” Mayor’s offices from across the country came together for a three-day session, where the City was able to speak about financial empowerment, as well as the work the City is doing across different city agencies and its community outreach efforts.
* There are also additional resources on the MOPD website for disability inclusion in disasters, including the Disability Access and Functional Needs Internet resource guide, which contains links to a variety of disability resources on the web.
* The MOPD also has a disability service facilitator program. There are over 40 DSFs across the city, including at the HRA, FDNY, NYPD, DOHMH and TLC. The DSFs act as liaisons to the MOPD. If you have contacted a DSF at a city agency and your issue was not resolved, please reach out to MOPD, who will follow-up with the DSF to make sure your issues are being addressed.
* Eli demonstrated to the room how to use alt text on Twitter. Alt text is a means to make communications more inclusive. Alt text enables people who are blind or low vision, to get a description of an image. To learn more about alt text and how to enable it on your twitter, please visit: [Accessible Social Media Guide](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/mopd/downloads/pdf/accessible_social_media_guide_mopd.pdf)

# Andrew Perlman, Chair of the Animal Planning Taskforce, NYCEM, discussed how pets and animals are accommodated in NYC during emergencies and disasters

* Service animals are specifically trained to perform a specific task or to do work for persons with disabilities. The Department of Justice states that a service animal is a dog.
* Service dogs are permitted in any public space that is covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act. When a service dog and their handler come into an emergency shelter, a service center or an evacuation center that the city supports, the facility staff can only ask two questions: (1) Is this a service animal and (2) what is the service animal trained to do.
* Documentation is not required and it is also not required for the service dog to wear any kind of visual marking or vest. The handler is also not required to demonstrate what the service dog is trained to do.
* Typically, service dogs are extremely well behaved and under the control of their handlers. If a dog is aggressive, is not clean, and otherwise is a problem in terms of safety or distraction to others in the facility, alternate accommodations should be made to move the handler and their service dog to another location. It is important to note, however, that just because a service dog is not on a leash does not mean the service dog is not in the handler’s control.
* Another exclusion to a public space would be if that space has to fundamentally alter its way of doing business. If a space has to fundamentally change the way they provide services or a program to accommodate the service dog then the dog can be excluded.
* Eli added that just because a service animal may be deemed to fundamentally alter the services and programs of for example, a zoo, the zoo can still provide alternate accessibility options. He also added that giving notice to places of public accommodation beforehand, is always recommended.
* Emotional support animals, which provide comfort or some kind of a therapeutic benefit to a handler, are not covered under the ADA.
* All pets are welcome in NYC emergency shelters. The city is prepared to accommodate about 70,000 people and 15,000 pets for up to a week. Shelter staff, who are typically city employees, are not responsible for taking care of the pets. It is the responsibility of the owner to care for their pets while in the shelter.
* Pets are not allowed to stay with the owner in the dormitory area, which is typically the gymnasium. The only exception to this rule are service dogs.
* NYCEM encourages people to plan for themselves and their families, it also wants people to include their pets in this planning.
* NYCEM also encourages the public to sign up for the City’s official notification system of imminent events. [Ready NYC](https://www1.nyc.gov/site/em/ready/ready-new-york.page) is a free application that people can customize to their zip code, in order to get notifications about events such as coastal storms.
* The Advanced Warning System (AWS) is an emergency notification that gets sent out to service providers. These organizations will get emergency notices, which they will then disseminate to the populations they serve.
* The Animal Planning Task Force is comprised of the ASPCA, animal care centers, the Mayor’s Alliance for New York City’s Animals, DOHMH, the Humane Society, Red Cross and many others. The animal task force meets monthly and also has plans in place for notice events such as fires and floods as well as for larger disasters like Hurricane Sandy.
* If someone has severe allergies to animals, NYCEM will move the person with the allergy to a place that is away from the service animal, as it is often easier to relocate the person with the allergy, than it is to relocate the service animal and their handler. NYCEM will relocate the person with the allergy within the facility, to a place that’s further away and where the person feels more comfortable.

# Chris Pagnotta, Program Manager, NYCEM discussed the City’s 2019 Heat Plan

* NYCEM works as the coordinating agency for a variety of city agencies, nonprofit partners and utility companies, to provide a coordinated heat response for New York City. It’s a real team effort to provide a response to extreme heat in the summertime.
* When NYCEM triggers the heat emergency plan, it has a set of triggers for what it quantifies.

* A heat emergency is when we see people having adverse reactions to heat. During these heat emergencies, the City’s main objectives are to prevent hospitalizations and prevent deaths.
* The City looks at the predicted heat index, which is the “feels like” temperature during a weather forecast. Two consecutive days of a 95 degrees heat index, is a heat emergency for the two days. It’s a trigger for implementing the emergency heat plan.
* NYCEM always consults with the National Weather Service to make sure the City has the latest forecast, in order to be ahead of predicted temperatures wherever it can, and to do the necessary groundwork to prepare for the actual heat.
* During a heat emergency, NYCEM objectives include hazard awareness and disseminating public messaging. City agencies also help to get the word out about these hazard temperatures through press conferences, press releases and social media messaging.
* NYCEM and other agencies try to minimize the impacts temperatures actually have, including to infrastructure, as everyone runs air conditioning during these times, which can put some strain on our electrical grid as well as on water and fire hydrants.
* NYCEM has over 1900 organizations that it keeps in its database on their Advancing Warning System website. When we hit the triggers for a heat emergency, NYCEM sends out a message to notify the organizations of this, as well as provides a checklist that these service providers can use to look for signs of heat related illness in their clients.
* Cooling centers are places that are open every day but when we hit these extreme temperatures, they have a special designation as a cooling center. These places include senior centers, libraries, community centers and recreation centers. When they’re acting as cooling centers, these places are providing a promise of air conditioning, access to water and a supervised environment. They are going to open their doors in to allow anyone in from the city.
* Homeless outreach is conducted by the Department of Homeless Services. On the days where there is a heat emergency, they specifically check-in on the most vulnerable clients on the streets—people who have had bad health outcomes in the past due to weather, or those who may be displaying other risk factors.
* ConEdison and PSEG are the two electricity providers for NYC. They recommend that customers put their air conditioners, on a temperature that is *just enough* to keep you cool without suffering bad health outcomes, as to avoid electricity failures.
* During a heat emergency, there’s also excavation alerts. This is about construction workers and how close they can dig to known electrical lines. When in a heat emergency, NYCEM has more stringent guidelines as to how close they’re allowed to get to that infrastructure.
* During heat emergencies, New Yorkers can go to a fire house and get a spray cap, which a firefighter will install. Once a spray cap is installed, New Yorkers can turn the fire hydrant into a sprinkler. If you don’t install a spray cap before opening a fire hydrant, water from the fire hydrant will flow freely and we will lose a lot of water and water pressure, which will inhibit firefighters’ ability to fight fires.
* NYCEM does pre-season messaging, which is available on their website and social media. They also attend meetings, such as this, to speak to different organizations and spread the word.
* To find cooling center locations during a heat emergency, please visit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/em/html/beat-the-heat/beattheheat.html>. Please note that the cooling center finder is only activated during heat emergencies.

# Munerah Ahmed, Director, Climate Health Project, DOHMH, discussed the heat’s health impact on the whole community

* On average, each summer, NYC sees about 13 heat stroke deaths, 450 emergency room visits, 150 hospital admissions and 115 excess deaths, which are deaths where high temperatures did not kill the person but played a role in exacerbating a medical condition they already had.
* There are many types of heat illnesses but the one the City worries about the most is heat stroke. The biggest warning sign for heat stroke is hot, dry skin. To respond to the heat, the body begins to sweat and you begin to have an increased need for thirst. When the body can no longer respond, sweating stops and the skin becomes hot and dry. If you see these symptoms, get the person to an emergency room or call 911.
* If you see a person who’s having cramping, fatigue or excessive sweating, it is a sign of heat exhaustion. Get the person to a cool place and monitor them. If they don’t have any fluid restrictions, give them water. If you see those symptoms turning into heat stroke, then call 911.
* Those who are most at risk of dying from a health-related death are those who do not have or do not use air conditioning and have chronic medical conditions, like heart disease, respiratory conditions, kidney disease, obesity, diabetes and psychiatric illnesses. Illnesses, themselves, or the medications taken to treat them, may impact a person’s ability to feel the heat.
* Also at risk from suffering a heat-related death are those who misuse drugs or alcohol, those who are socially isolated, those who are limited mobility and those who live on limited incomes. In addition, among African-American New Yorkers, the risk of heat-related stroke or death is higher than in white New Yorkers.
* It is important that people who take medication, speak to their health care providers and pharmacists. Medications can interact with heat and increase the risk for heat stroke. It is very important to speak to your pharmacist at the start of the heat season to see if there are any medications you’re taking that might impair you during a heat event.
* The City recommends setting air conditioners to 78 degrees, which allows people to not only protect the grid but also to save money on their bills. If you can’t stay cool at home, go to an official cooling center but you can also go to any type of place that's publicly accessible and that has air conditioning.
* When the City looks at the risk among communities, communities that have less green space, higher surface temperatures, more people on public assistance, higher percentage of African-American residents, it sees that the risk for dying in those neighborhoods is higher than in neighborhoods that do not have those characteristics.
* The City does have the cool neighborhoods NYC Heat Strategic Plan to try to address some of those inequities. Since 2017, the City began planting trees in communities that are heat vulnerable to try to level the playing field across New York City.
* The City also has a Heat Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), which is now open to provide air conditioning support. This program allows for a voucher of up to $800 to be used for the purchase and the installation of air conditions. A person applying for the voucher must have a documented medical condition and must meet a household income criteria. Furthermore, individuals who live in public housing or receive Section 8 are not eligible. For more information about HEAP, please visit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/energy-assistance.page>
* It is important to *be a buddy* and prepare your clients, family members, friends, neighbors and others within your network. Before it even gets to summer, it’s important to check to see who has air conditioning and who doesn’t and to determine who has a health risk factor. It’s imperative that your remind them of how to keep safe during extreme heat. Encourage them to drink plenty of water, to use air conditioning, if they have it, and to go to a cooling center, if there’s one nearby. During a heat emergency, call them to see if they’re safe and if possible, find others within their social sphere who can also check-in on them.
* Most power outage occur during extreme heat. The DOHMH encourages those who use electrical medical equipment to register with their utility provider so they know that the person is there and can give notification, if a power outage is coming. DOHMH also recommends having back-up batteries, if a person uses a ventilator, and having a backup tanks, if using an oxygen tank. The NYPD can also do wellness checks.
* During a power outage, it’s important to drink a lot of water, wear light, loose clothing and draw down the shades to keep the sun out. Also, generators should always be used away from doors, windows and vents. They should never be used indoors because they can cause carbon monoxide poisoning.

# Resources

* [REAADI.com](https://reaadi.com/)
* [Accessible Social Media Guide](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/mopd/downloads/pdf/accessible_social_media_guide_mopd.pdf)
* For individuals: [Ready NYC](https://www1.nyc.gov/site/em/ready/ready-new-york.page)
* For organizations: [The Advanced Warning System](https://www.advancewarningsystemnyc.org/aws/)
* [Cooling Centers](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/em/html/beat-the-heat/beattheheat.html)
* [HEAP](https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/energy-assistance.page)

# Contact Information

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