

Emergency Planning for People with Access and Functional Needs

Symposium Report

About NYC Citizen Corps

NYC Citizen Corps—coordinated by NYC Emergency Management—is part of a national initiative that joins the government and non-profit sectors to promote emergency preparedness and strengthen New Yorkers’ ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

An important part of our mission is to work with community-based organizations that serve people with disabilities to provide resources necessary to incorporate all needs into emergency planning. Along with building new partnerships, we are expanding our trainings and other resources to support emergency planning for people with access and functional needs.

Join the NYC Citizen Corps Network to receive electronic news about relevant initiatives, upcoming events and emergency alerts.

About the Access, and Functional Needs Symposium

The first Access and Functional Needs Symposium was held in 2010 to bring together stakeholders in emergency planning for people with disabilities to share best practices and resources, promote partnerships, and strengthen emergency planning for people with access and functional needs.

On December 3, 2015, NYC Emergency Management hosted its fourth NYC Citizen Corps Access and Functional Needs Symposium, **Stakeholders in Dialogue**, which gave agency planners, advocates, and other partners an opportunity to discuss important emergency operations and plans. Breakout discussions were led by subject matter experts who presented on various topics, discussed challenges and solutions, and collected feedback from participants.

Participant feedback is already fostering dialogue and shaping planning efforts.



Table of Contents

About NYC Citizen Corps	
About the Access, and Functional Needs Symposium.	2
About This Report	5
Communications	6
Carla Lynn Holub, Home Based Care Alliance (HBCA)	
Ben Krakauer, NYC Emergency Management (NYCEM)	
Preparedness and Sheltering in Place	8
Braulio Fernandez, Consolidated Edison (ConEd)	
Iskra Gencheva, NYCEM	
Access to Essential Resources	10
Mitch Stripling, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)	
Joseph Whitney, NYCEM	
Emergency Sheltering and Service Centers	12
Jay Brandt, NYCEM	
Deborah Hayden, American Red Cross in Greater New York (ARC GNY)	
Evacuation and Transportation	14
Hayley Coleman, NYCEM	
Judy Walker, Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)	
Healthcare Facilities	18
Anna Bennett, End Stage Renal Disease Network of New York (ESRD)	
Mordy Goldfeder, NYCEM	
Service Provider Planning	20
Cheryl Karran, YAI	
Linda Whitaker, NYC Department for the Aging (DFTA)	
Conclusion	23



Severe Weather

School Closures

Subway Disruptions

Get Notified

about emergencies
email, phone, text
BBM, and instant

Sign up now to
from the City
notification
NYC-go
follow



About This Report:

This report serves as a tool for New York City residents and emergency planners representing government and nonprofit sectors. It is organized around the seven topics represented at the 2015 Access and Functional Needs Symposium and provides an overview of challenges, proposed solutions, best practices, and resources that were discussed by participants. Each topic is divided into the following sections:

- **Overview**—provides general information and context about emergency planning programs, services, resources that were discussed at the Symposium
- **Take Action and What to Know**—highlights key information and action items for people with access and functional needs and their providers, if applicable
- **Challenges and Recommendations Identified by Participants**—summarizes challenges and best practices that may be replicated by other organizations or programs

This report is a resource for preparedness planning for individuals, organizations and community members. Please share it widely so that we may continue to work together to enhance emergency planning efforts. Your feedback and comments are welcome at citizencorps@oem.nyc.gov.

For general inquiries, call 311 (TTY: 212-504-4115).

Communications

- What are timely and reliable sources of emergency information?
- What specific communication tools are available for people with access or functional needs?
- What are effective means of communication before, during and after an emergency?

Discussion Leaders

Carla Lynn Holub
Home Based Care Alliance²

Ben Krakauer
NYC Emergency Management

Notify NYC is New York City's official source of information about emergency events and important City services. On average, over 1,500 messages are sent via Notify NYC per year to nearly 400,000 subscribers. Messages are available via email, text, phone call, Twitter and other means.

The Advance Warning System, managed by NYC Emergency Management and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, is designed to disseminate detailed emergency information to agencies and organizations as quickly as possible so that serve people with disabilities, access and/or functional needs may have more time to properly respond to the needs of their clients.

Take Action:



Register for Notify NYC

Sign-up online at nyc.gov/notifynyc or by calling 311 (TTY: 212-504-4115).

Registration is free and customizable to specific areas and alerts.

The program has expanded to offer the most common Notify NYC alerts in 13 languages, American Sign Language (ASL), and audio format.

²Home Based Care Alliance (HBCA) is a network of direct care providers, local and state government entities, and organizations that support infants, children and adults who are homebound, elderly or disabled. HBCA advocates on behalf of home-based care agencies before and during emergency events. Learn about joining the HBCA here.



Sign up for the Advance Warning System

Sign-up online at [the Advance Warning System](#) if you represent an organization that serves people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. Membership includes:

- Real-time notifications and alerts through email and text messages.
- Access to preparedness and emergency-specific resources.
- Invitation to the NYC Access and Functional Needs Working Group, an opportunity to receive information, build partnerships and engage in discussions around emergency planning specific to people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs.

Other Sources of Information

- [NYC Citizen Corps](#)
- NYCEM Website and Social Media: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#)
- [NYC Severe Weather](#)

Challenges and Recommendations Identified by Participants

Organizations should determine how they will best disseminate messaging. For people who have difficulty reading alerts, organizations should plan on using alternative methods to communicate emergency information such as picture messaging.

Focusing on community preparedness, support networks, and how neighbors can help each other can be an effective way to reach people who are not connected to service providers or organizations.

[NYC Citizen Corps](#) is one way to get involved with community based preparedness.

Using Notify NYC

SelectCare Home Care Services uses Notify NYC by:

Introducing Notify NYC during new employee orientation and revisit annually.

Encouraging field staff members to register for the zip codes including where they live and where their family member(s) live. Nursing supervisors choose zip codes that cover most of the client population. Service coordinators choose zip codes where most field staff live. Administrators choose zip codes that cover high volume transit hubs in the boroughs.

Forwarding relevant messages to clients, families, and field staff

Using the Advance Warning System

HBCA membership organizations are expected to share the message with their clients, caregivers, administrators and community partners by following these steps:

STEP 1: Delete any NYCEM contact information before sending out the message to clients.

STEP 2: Increase the size of the font of the message, as needed.

STEP 3: Add an introductory message regarding the organization's specific emergency preparedness instructions and alternate contact phone numbers.

Preparedness and Sheltering in Place

- How can people make informed decisions around sheltering in place?
- What are key preparedness actions and resources?
- What emergency resources does Con Edison offer its customers?

Discussion Leaders

Braulio Fernandez
Con Edison

Iskra Gencheva
NYC Emergency
Management

The ability to shelter in place—that is, being prepared to stay where you are for a number of hours or days—is a key element of emergency preparedness and is important for all kinds of emergency events. Planning to shelter in place requires individuals to prepare according to their unique needs and circumstances and consider things like communication, medication, and electricity.

Con Edison offers various emergency preparedness options and information on its [website](#). Con Edison takes the following actions to advise customers about potential outages due to a storm, heat or winter event:

- **Prior to the outage:** Con Edison conducts outreach advising of the potential for a power outage to disabled and/or elderly clients, and facilities and clients who have indicated they depend on life sustaining equipment.
- **When there is information about the affected area(s):** Con Edison calls clients to verify whether any life sustaining equipment customers in the affected area are without power.
- **If the outage is confirmed:** Con Edison will notify the customers of the estimated time of restoration, if available. If Con Edison is unable to reach the customer after two attempts, Con Edison reaches out to NYPD for a safety check. NYPD will go out to the customer's location to check on the customer.

Take Action:



Stay informed through [Notify NYC](#) alerts.



Follow the steps outlined in [My Emergency Plan](#) which is available in [audio format and other languages](#). Anyone who has a home health aide, nurse, social worker, or anyone else who visits their home on regular basis should have these providers included in their emergency plan. Service animals and pets should also be included in your plan.

-  If you rely on life sustaining equipment that runs on electricity, register with your utility provider and record information about the battery backup and battery life.
-  If you have complex medical needs, prepare medical files with complete medical information.
-  If you use prescription medications, talk to your doctor about which medications are essential and how to get an emergency supply. Keep a copy of your prescriptions in your Go Bag.
-  Don't assume your utility provider knows there is an outage—report it by calling your provider.
-  **Join NYC Citizen Corps** and if you represent an organization that serves people with disabilities, sign up for the **Advance Warning System**.
-  Register your business or organization for **Partners in Preparedness**, NYC Emergency Management's nationally recognized program.

Resources

Request a presentation:

- Con-Edison Customer **Outreach Team**: 1-800-293-5680
- NYC Emergency Management **Ready New York**: readyny@oem.nyc.gov or 311

Con Edison's **CONCERN Program** offers information on safety tips and emergency preparedness for seniors and people with a permanent disability. Enroll by calling 1-800-872-8846.

Con Edison's **Storm Central Page** provides a storm preparation checklist and has the ability for customers to report an electric outage.

View NYC Emergency Management's **webpage** for more information.

Challenges and Recommendations Identified by Participants

Durable medical equipment companies should share information about utility resources with customers who use life sustaining equipment to help educate more people around the availability of these programs.

Engaging people with cognitive disabilities in emergency planning may be a challenge. One solution is partnering with trusted organizations and service providers so that vital information and emergency resources can be disseminated appropriately.

People indicated they would like to understand what to expect at an emergency shelter if they are evacuating. Finding ways to familiarize more people with the shelter system and what can be expected can help people make more informed decisions. Please refer to the Sheltering and Service Center Section for information on emergency shelters.

Access to Essential Resources

- What are some ways to access necessities during and after an emergency?
- What is the best way to learn about essential resources during an event?

Discussion Leaders

Mitch Stripling

NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Joseph Whitney

NYC Emergency Management

Depending on circumstances and need, the City will aim to provide essential services and supplies to affected individuals after a disaster such as:

- Food
- Water
- Relocation
- Medical Assistance
- Medical Equipment/Prescriptions

The City's Emergency Feeding Strategy is a multi-agency effort to provide food and water to an impacted population. The emergency feeding strategy focuses on the provision of fresh foods whenever possible. The City's Food Access Lead Team, made up of non-profit, public and private organizations, is responsible for the implementation and coordination of the emergency feeding response. Emergency feeding may be provided through fixed meal distribution sites, mobile feeding units or commodity distribution points. The City also provides feeding services, both directly in impacted communities, as well as in its coastal storm shelter system.

The Commodity Distribution Point (CDP) Program is a coordinated, City-led operation that distributes life-sustaining commodities, like food, water, ice, and baby formula, in cases where they may be temporarily unavailable. This may occur when an emergency or disaster disrupts access to the usual supply chains for these products.

The CDP program is scalable, meaning that one or multiple distribution sites can be activated to handle the community need for these goods. Commodities may be distributed to the public using either a walk-through or drive-through model. Sixty-four sites, primarily schools and parks, have been identified throughout the five boroughs—at least one in each community district—to use as points of distribution.

Additionally, the City is currently developing the **Post Emergency Canvassing Operation (PECO)** to survey impacted areas after a disaster to determine critical needs of homebound and vulnerable individuals and refer those needs to appropriate partners for resolution. This operation is led by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and is staffed by multiple City agencies.

PECO is intended for disasters that significantly impact more than 5,000 households for over 48 hours and would start as soon as the environment is deemed safe for canvassers.

Take Action

 **Share Your Space** which can help identify spaces in communities that could potentially support the City's emergency operations, such as the CDP program.

 At a CDP site, someone who has a disability or functional need should identify themselves to the flow monitors or site manager to facilitate accommodations.

Challenges and Recommendations Identified by Participants

Pre-identified locations for City-led emergency services can be compromised or need to change, based on the impact and scale of disaster, informing people in affected areas changes in services is difficult. Community members and organizations should rely on authorized communication channels and help distribute information through their networks. Refer to the Communications Section in this report for ways to stay connected and informed.

Communities and community organizations often have critical information that can help assess critical needs during an emergency. Connect with networks such as **NYC Citizen Corps** and **NYC Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster** before an emergency happens to facilitate sharing and receiving information.

What to Know

At a CDP site, volunteers and staff will distribute necessities, and flow monitors are assigned to support the safe and efficient movement of individuals through the site.

Flow monitors are trained to identify people with visible functional needs and serve them directly to reduce the time they wait in line.

The CDP program is not the only program in the city that addresses feeding needs and the CDP program will only be activated in the event that all other feeding strategies are not meeting the need.

The CDP program does not provide door to door delivery. At a CDP site, service providers can work with the site manager to assess and potentially fulfill needs for items already being distributed.

The CDP program continues to test various locations and is proactively including the needs of people with disabilities through CDP trainings and exercises.

As lead agency for PECO, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) is creating a training and exercise program to include disability and cultural competency in the procedures and decisions needed for executing PECO and looks to build upon local partnerships and integrate the work of community partners in this operation.

Emergency Sheltering and Service Centers

- What is a service center? What is an emergency shelter?
- What services and accommodations can people expect when arriving at an emergency shelter or service center?

Discussion Leaders

Jay Brandt

NYC Emergency Management

Deborah Hayden

American Red Cross in Greater New York

Service Centers

The City may open a service center following emergencies that affect a significant number of people. Service centers may be referred to by different names such as restoration centers, resident service centers, or disaster assistance service centers, but the objective remains the same: provide focused and efficient delivery of governmental and non-profit services to people impacted by a disaster.

The NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA) and NYCEM coordinate service center operations and services offered are tailored to the needs of those affected by the disaster. Assistance may include the following, among other services:

- Cash benefits from the American Red Cross or other groups
- Housing assistance from the City's Department for Housing Preservation and Development or other agencies
- Food benefits from HRA

Emergency Shelters

The City will open emergency shelters for disasters when residents have been displaced from their homes. If an evacuation order is issued ahead of an expected coastal storm, people who live in the affected evacuation zones should activate their emergency plan to stay with friends and family outside of an evacuated zone. If staying with family or friends is not an option, people should report to an **evacuation center**. At an evacuation center, evacuees may receive services such as medical screening, animal assistance, and family reunification before being transported to a hurricane shelter or special medical needs shelter.

- **Hurricane shelters** are facilities outside of the evacuation zones that offer essential services to preserve the health and safety of evacuees. The City will provide basic mass care support items that include food, water, baby formulas, blankets and other durable medical goods and supplies.
- **Special medical needs shelters**, also outside of evacuation zones, are located throughout the five boroughs for evacuees who do not require hospital or nursing home care, but require specialized assistance based on their condition or medical history. The City will provide special medical needs cots, along with other medical items.

City emergency shelters include accessibility amenities such as accessible cots and mobility aids (canes, crutches, manual wheelchairs, storage space for refrigerated medication) to power priority signage for people who rely on electrical medical equipment.

Accessible shelters and their features are indicated on the **zone finder**.

Challenges and Recommendations Identified by Participants

Anxiety can increase during an emergency. Having detailed written information about medications and conditions can help with this stressor and helps shelter or service center staff best identify critical needs. Refer to the Preparedness and Sheltering in Place section for more information.

Many people may be fearful or hesitant of going to a service center or emergency shelter because they do not know what to expect. Outreach to residents or clients about the services and accommodations that are available at these facilities helps familiarize people with the services they can expect.

What to Know

Emergency shelters and service centers, when opened, are available to anyone that needs them.

Center or shelter managers will provide accommodations, including language interpretation, to ensure services are accessible to all New Yorkers. Anyone seeking shelter or services should let staff know if they need any particular communication assistance or service.

Anyone can access a service center or emergency shelter regardless of immigration status. However, eligibility for services may vary.

Families are not separated at shelters.

Service animals and durable medical equipment are permitted at service centers and emergency shelters.

Pets are permitted at City emergency shelters.

Home health care aides are permitted to stay with their clients.

Both the City and the Red Cross have made improvements to their intake process for shelters to assist staff in identifying health, access and functional needs and facilitate requests for support or additional resources as needed. Evacuees can self-determine their needs and answer questions if they choose.

For more information, visit nyc.gov/knowyourzone or call 311 (TTY:212-504-4115)

Evacuation and Transportation

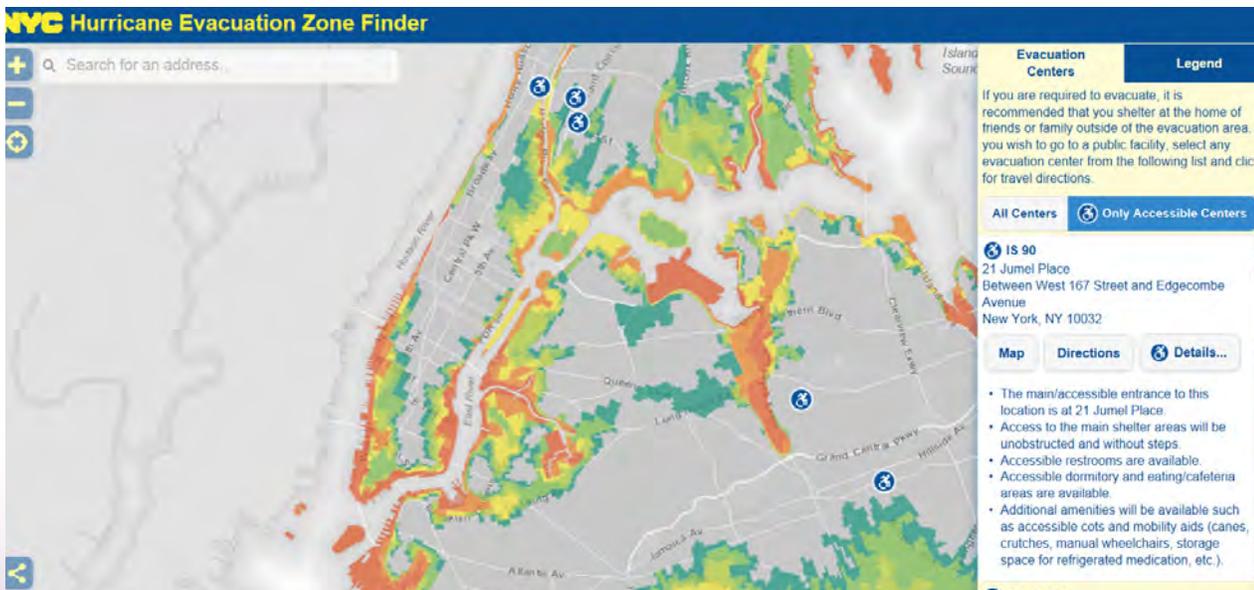
- How can individuals be prepared to evacuate during emergencies?
- What can the public expect from City and State transportation services and what should they plan for?

Discussion Leaders

Hayley Coleman
NYC Emergency Management

Judy Walker
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

In the event of a coastal storm, an evacuation order will typically be issued about 48 hours ahead of the storm’s landfall. Public transportation may shut down hours before the impacts of the storm are fully felt. To allow for any transit shutdown and safe relocation with family, friends or to a city-run shelter, it is crucial that all New Yorkers receive timely information and be prepared for an emergency that could require them to leave their homes.



The Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) primary goals during any emergency evacuation are to:

- Assist with successful evacuation
- Ensure safety of customers and employees
- Protect infrastructure and equipment

MTA Bus Service: During an emergency that requires an evacuation, MTA bus service generally follows near-normal routes in order to minimize confusion. During a coastal storm there may be minor re-routing when the bus route is not close enough to an **evacuation center**. There may also be increased MTA bus service from evacuation zones if required.

MTA Subway Service: Subway service will remain normal as long as possible. Additional trains will be positioned to facilitate increased service from evacuation zones as needed. MTA shutdowns will generally occur at least six to eight hours prior to the onset of sustained tropical storm force winds (39 MPH). Service that is farther from evacuation areas may be limited or eliminated sooner.

Access-A-Ride (the MTA's paratransit service):

During a coastal storm, Access-A-Ride will continue to operate to support evacuation of people with disabilities and functional needs until storm conditions necessitate shutdown. Access-A-Ride contractors call people with scheduled trips to ensure they are aware of service shutdown and determine whether they want to cancel or advance their pick up time.

What if I am unable to evacuate on my own or know someone who needs evacuation assistance?

When an evacuation order is issued, people who have no other options to evacuate safely, may call 311 to request evacuation assistance:

- This evacuation service is not limited to Access-A-Ride registrants and does not require advance reservation.
- Traveling with service animals and/or durable medical equipment is permitted.
- The transportation need is determined through the conversation with 311 who will connect the caller to the appropriate agency for evacuation assistance.
- Depending on the need, the evacuee will either be taken to a hospital outside of the evacuation zone via ambulance, OR an accessible evacuation center in an accessible vehicle where they can be transported to a shelter or special medical needs shelter.
- Evacuees will not be able to request transportation to a specific address.

Take Action

- Register for **Notify NYC**.
Pay attention to official public alerts.
- Know what evacuation zone you live in.**
- Determine where and how you may evacuate if there is an evacuation order.
Aim to have a means of transportation and an identified location outside of an **evacuation zone** where you can stay.
- Have a back-up plan and a map in case you have to take alternate routes.
Refer to the Sheltering and Service Center section of this report for more information.
- Evacuate as soon as possible if an evacuation order is made. During this time the MTA may make available additional transportation resources to facilitate mass evacuation.
- Look at the Preparedness and Sheltering in Place Section of this report and **Ready New York** guides for more tips.
- Share emergency plans ahead of time with people who can offer support via transportation or a place to stay outside a zone if there is an evacuation order.

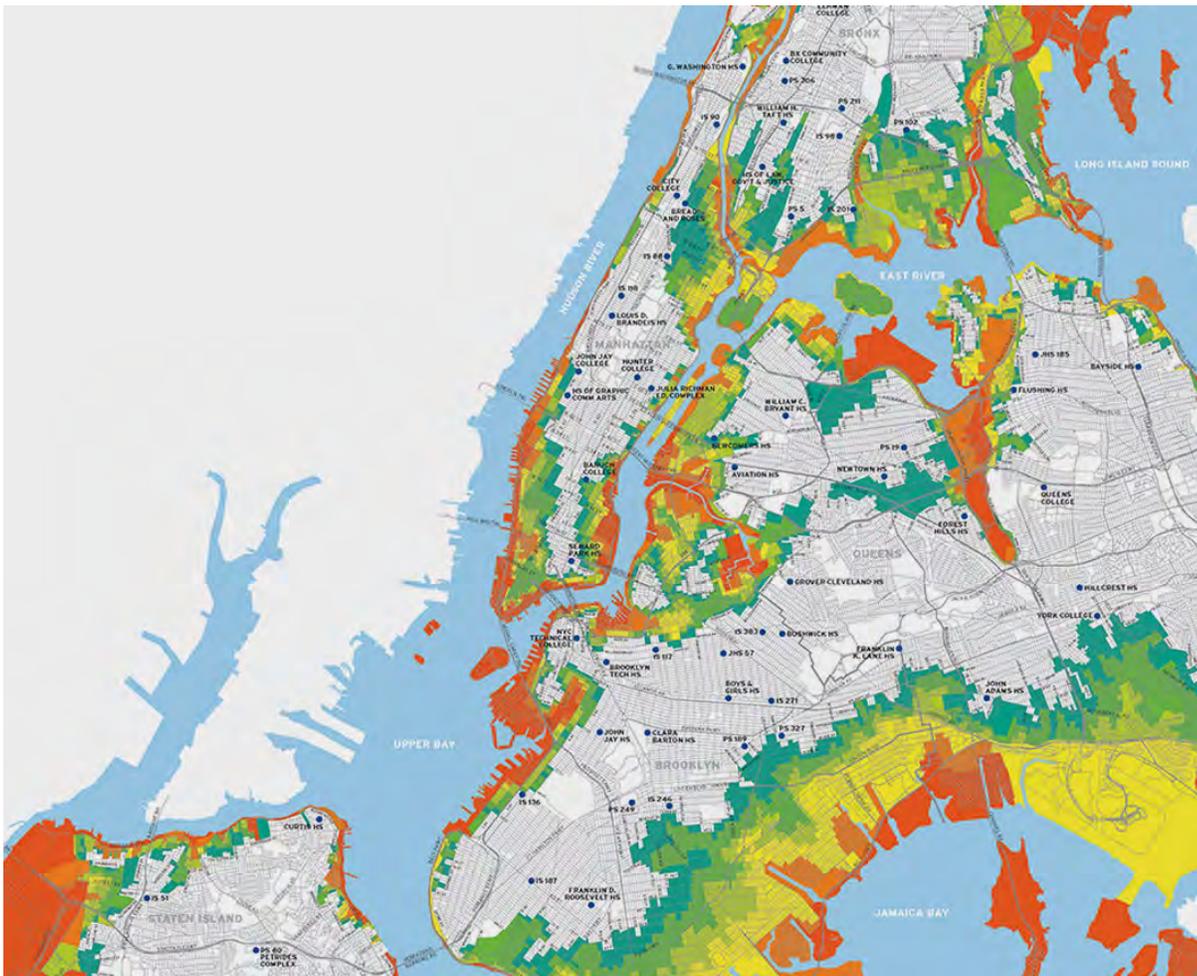


Challenges and Recommendations Identified by Participants

People often do not believe it is necessary to evacuate, especially if the warnings are so early that weather does not look threatening. Encouraging neighbors to share messaging about evacuation warnings, especially to people who may not be connected or who may need extra time to travel is important. Continued public outreach on personal preparedness resources such as **Ready New York** and **Know Your Zone** helps New Yorkers know the hazards that can result in the issuance of evacuation order.

People may not always consider transportation in their personal emergency planning. Reviewing and sharing before an event helps highlight transportation needs. Apps like the Ready New York phone app help facilitate communication about where a person is after an emergency event.

Service providers, budget permitting, can consider investing in additional fleet resources, which could serve as a resource to secure evacuation transportation for staff and clients during an emergency.



Healthcare Facilities

- How do healthcare facilities prepare for emergencies?
- What resources are available to healthcare facilities before, during and after an event?

Discussion Leaders

Anna Bennett

End Stage Renal Disease Network of New York (ESRD)

Mordy Goldfeder

NYC Emergency Management

NYCEM's Health and Medical Unit works with public health agencies, hospitals, and emergency medical services on critical surge, response, and recovery issues to prepare for emergencies with major public health impacts. This unit also coordinates related training with these entities.

The Healthcare Evacuation Center (HEC) is an operation that is managed by the New York State Department of Health in coordination with New York City and is activated when a coastal storm threatens to flood healthcare facilities in any of NYC's six hurricane evacuation zones. Staff in the HEC work to coordinate the movement of patients from facilities in these zones to similar facilities outside of the flood zones and then back to their original location once the storm has passed.

NYCEM runs an Emergency Radio Communication Program which provides healthcare facilities with radios that can be used to communicate with NYCEM should their normal modes of communication fail. The radios are programed for a citywide talk group or a channel shared by all nursing homes or all adult care facilities. The talk groups allow the facilities to communicate with NYCEM and each other and to receive emergency messages. Participation in this program is voluntary. For nursing homes and adult care facilities the participation rate is over 95%.

NYCEM, in conjunction with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), expanded the City's Emergency Radio Communication Program to include nursing homes and adult care facilities. All facilities in the program are expected to use normal modes of communication and follow their standard operating procedures during emergencies (i.e., calling 9-1-1 and reaching out to parent organizations and/or associations). The radios are used as a last resort form of communication if, and only if, all other forms of communication have failed.

What to Know

Healthcare facilities are required by law to have a written emergency plan that covers any possible emergency and includes having agreements with other healthcare facilities to evacuate their patients to and contracts with transportation companies to carry out their plans. These plans are available at the facility.

There are many programs that are available to healthcare facilities before, during, and after an emergency, including those offered by healthcare coalitions, associations and the NYCEM Health and Medical Unit. Healthcare facilities should first look to their associations and networks to support their emergency plans and exercise these plans frequently.

Challenges and Recommendations Identified by Participants

Training and recruiting leadership staff to implement a culture of preparedness is important.

Healthcare facilities should have a clear plan for communicating with their network liaison to get the most up-to-date information regarding an emergency.

Consider conducting a hot wash or after action discussion following an emergency to review lessons learned that can formally be incorporated into future emergency plans and protocols.

Think about how your facility can collaborate with agencies and networks in planning, responding to and reporting during emergencies. For example, in partnership with NYCEM, ESRD conducted a survey of emergency needs of all 113 dialysis facilities in NYC.

Resources

In 2015, the Health and Medical Unit conducted a Healthcare Evacuation Center (HEC) exercise and created an explanatory video which can be accessed [here](#)

The End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Network of New York works with federal, state and local government agencies as needed to assist with patient safety and keep dialysis facilities up and running during and after emergencies. ESRD has emergency preparedness and reporting resources for healthcare facilities that can be found on their [website](#).



Service Provider Planning

- How do service organizations provide resources for their particular community during times of emergency?
- What are some internal planning best practices for service providers?
- What are some external planning considerations for services providers?

Discussion Leaders

Cheryl Karran
YAI

Linda Whitaker
NYC Department for
the Aging

The NYC Department for the Aging (DFTA), works to eliminate ageism, ensure the dignity and quality of life of New York City's diverse older adults, and to support caregivers, through service, advocacy, and education. The DFTA Bureau of Emergency Preparedness oversees the development of emergency plans for the agency, contracted programs and works with community partners on continuity plans.

DFTA emergency planning includes:

- Prioritizing high-risk clients – DFTA encourages providers to call their clients ahead of time to determine whether they need assistance as well as follow up after an emergency event
- Establishing call trees with subcontractors and providers
- Ensuring that there are dedicated phone lines to provide pre-recorded updates and reminders to older adults to have supplies on hand for an emergency
- Amplifying time-of emergency event messaging and updates
- Equipping senior centers that serve lunch and operate at least three days per week with automated external defibrillators (AED)
- Assisting in certifying staff and volunteers so that they can operate AEDs

YAI is a network of agencies offering children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities a comprehensive range of services. Some of the services provided by the YAI Network include: referral services, a school age program, family support services, primary and specialty health care, mental health and rehabilitation services, day services, employment training and placement, and residential opportunities.

YAI emergency planning includes:

- Creating an “all hands on deck” culture. The YAI Network embraces the concept of all staff being essential staff, which is supported and maintained by their leadership and upper management.
- Assigning each staff member programs close to where they live to facilitate access to clients during emergencies.
- Supporting the organization’s emergency planning with the appropriate staffing structures and technology. For example, the YAI Network has developed a working committee to focus on emergency preparedness and purchased a broad blast system which sends texts, emails or telephone messages to staff in the event of an emergency. This system was utilized during winter storms in 2014.

Take Action

- Determine the most effective means of communicating with your clients ahead of time. For example, with seniors it may be most effective to communicate directly and in person. Case management agencies may communicate with clients via home care workers, home delivered meal drivers, and case managers to impart information.
- Communicate information about an impending event to clients, staff, social workers, and any other caregivers in your networks soon as it is available. Utilize **the Advance Warning System**
- Dispel misconceptions in your messaging where possible. For example share that service animals, pets and durable medical equipment are acceptable at emergency shelters.
- Require emergency plans of staff and of each organization you work with. This includes emergency contacts for subcontractors and ensuring staff have personal emergency plans. Refer to the Preparedness and Sheltering in Place Section of this report for resources.
- Host events, that foster a culture around emergency preparedness.
- Create a plan for ensuring that vulnerable clients have access to air conditioners/ fans or cooling centers during the summer and assistance with snow shoveling during the winter.
- Work with landlords and management companies. Local relationships can be helpful in identifying people who need assistance.

Challenges and Recommendations Identified by Participants

- For the YAI Network, one of the biggest challenges during emergencies is tracking people who live in the community who may have been displaced more than once. Case managers check in with families before and after emergency events in order to best keep track and receive updates from families.
- Since DFTA's emergency unit is small for the vast portfolio of social service programs offered, keeping staff and community partners engaged is essential. Continuing to find ways to share the importance of planning ahead for hazards is useful.





Conclusion

Thank you to the planning committee who was involved in creating the 2015 Access and Functional Needs Symposium. They include:

Emily Accamando
NYC Emergency Management

Elizabeth Angeles
NYC Emergency Management

Dennis Boyd
NYC Emergency Management

Christina Buckley
Pedestrians for Accessible
and Safe Streets Coalition

Kathryn Dyjak
NYC Emergency Management

Christina Farrell
NYC Emergency Management

Eli Fresquez
NYC Emergency Management

Marianne Jackson
NYC Emergency Management

Nicholas Kaminski
Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities

Joan Peters
Brooklyn Center for Independence
of the Disabled

Edith Prentiss
Disabled in Action

Herman Schaffer
NYC Emergency Management

Linda Whitaker
Department for the Aging

NYC Citizen Corps is committed to building partnerships with the disability community and service providers to enhance citywide emergency planning efforts. Please stay tuned for our continued developments, and feel free to contact us at citizencorps@oem.nyc.gov.

