

Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Hello everyone. Welcome to "Prep Talk," the emergency management podcast. Find out what you need to know about preparedness. Get all the latest tips from experts in the field and learn what to do before the next disaster strikes.

Speaker 1: [00:19](#) From the emergency management department in the city that never sleeps, here are your hosts Omar Bourne and Allison Pennisi.

Omar Bourne: [00:26](#) Hello everyone. Thank you for listening. I'm Omar Bourne.

Allison Pennisi: [00:29](#) And I'm Allison Pennisi. Thank you for joining us. We want you to come back as often as you can, so feel free to add "Prep Talk" to your favorite RSS feed. You could also follow us on social media.

Omar Bourne: [00:39](#) Now September is National Preparedness Month and this episode, we're talking about the importance of preparing ourselves, family, friends, and community before an emergency.

Allison Pennisi: [00:48](#) That's right, Omar. Disasters don't plan ahead, but we can. New York City Emergency Management teaches New Yorkers about emergency preparedness through the Ready New York Program. The team has a number of events planned throughout September, and here to talk to us about how you can get involved is Iskra Killgore, Director of Community Engagement and Language Access here at New York City Emergency Management.

Allison Pennisi: [01:10](#) Iskra, thanks for joining us. Welcome to "Prep Talk."

Iskra Killgore: [01:10](#)

New Speaker: [01:12](#) Thank you for having me.

Omar Bourne: [01:14](#) Now Iskra, before we get into National Preparedness Month, tell us a little about your role at Emergency Management.

Iskra Killgore: [01:20](#) I manage our individual preparedness program called Ready New York, our Community Preparedness Program, and language access. I basically work on preparedness on the individual and community levels, and I also make sure that we can meet the language access needs of New Yorkers with limited English proficiency before, during, and after an emergency. But I want to take just a minute here to talk a little bit more about Ready New York because this is the program that manages most of our National Preparedness Month events.

- Iskra Killgore: [01:52](#) The goal of Ready New York is very simple. We want to educate New Yorkers about the importance of emergency preparedness. We generally target four groups: children, older adults, people with disabilities, and people with limited English proficiency. We do community fairs and presentations in all five boroughs, seven days a week.
- Allison Pennisi: [02:16](#) Wow. Yes, so the Ready New York program embodies community engagement and as you mentioned, your team is teaching New Yorkers in all communities about preparedness. Can you tell us about National Preparedness Month and the emphasis on getting people ready before emergencies?
- Iskra Killgore: [02:31](#) Sure. National Preparedness Month is a national initiative, which we celebrate every September. It's a good opportunity to remind us all that we need to be prepared now but also throughout the year. This year, the focus of National Preparedness Month is on planning, and the overarching theme is disasters happen, prepare now, learn how.
- Iskra Killgore: [02:53](#) This is a very important message because I talk to a lot of New Yorkers about emergency preparedness and what I hear very often is that there always will be time to prepare for an emergency. The reality is that a lot of emergencies happen unexpectedly. For example, fires, and you don't want to be caught off-guard. It's important to think about preparedness now.
- Omar Bourne: [03:16](#) I like that you mentioned that. I remember, we had a PSA a few years ago, winging it is not an option. It kind of ties into what you're talking about, Iskra, where people always think that there's time to prepare ahead of an emergency. So I'm happy that you guys are out in the communities trying to get people thinking about that.
- Omar Bourne: [03:38](#) Going back to National Preparedness Month, I know that there are weekly themes for the month. Can you share with our listeners what they can expect?
- Iskra Killgore: [03:45](#) Yes. The first theme for the first week of September is Make and Practice your Plan. The second week, Learn Life-Saving Skills. Third week, Check Your Insurance. And we're going to close off the month with Save for an Emergency.
- Allison Pennisi: [04:03](#) All right. So looking at week one, you said it's Make and Practice Your Plan. So now this includes making a plan for the entire family, people with disabilities, access and functional needs,

seniors, pets, even businesses. What are some key points that the Ready New York program emphasizes, especially during this week?

- Iskra Killgore: [04:25](#) It's very important to think about preparedness in a holistic way. I always tell people to look at their day to day lives, the things that they do every day, and prepare redundancies for their basic needs. And this will vary from person to person, and also is not that difficult. It can be quite simple.
- Iskra Killgore: [04:46](#) For example, if you lose power, do you have flashlights? When planning, as Allison already said, it's very important to include everybody in your plan, so that includes your pets. It can also include people who visit your home on a regular basis. For example, if you have a home health aide, that's important for that person to be included in your plan.
- Iskra Killgore: [05:12](#) But the most important thing is to create an emergency support network, and this will be people who will be helping you during an emergency. They need to know your needs and they need to be prepared to assist you.
- Allison Pennisi: [05:26](#) I think that's great. I mean we talk about this a lot on "Prep Talk" in a lot of our talking points to the community that having everybody get involved and having a support network is always helpful. If it's something as simple as saying hey, take a copy of my key, or it's I need somebody else to know my medical needs. I think it's a really great point that New Yorkers, we're here for each other no matter what, despite what people think, that New Yorkers are there for one another, so I think that's a really great point.
- Omar Bourne: [05:54](#) And along with planning, information is also key before, during and after an emergency. Iskra, what are some available information resources people can use as part of their emergency plan?
- Iskra Killgore: [06:08](#) The best source of information in New York City is Notify NYC. This is the official source for emergency information in our city and it's a great way for people to stay informed. We now also have an app so people can download the app or they can sign up for the service by calling 3-1-1 or going on the website. And the great thing about Notify is that a lot of the words available in 12 different languages, in addition to English, and also in sign language.

- Iskra Killgore: [06:41](#) Another good source of information is our Community Preparedness newsletter. This is a weekly newsletter which contains a lot of good information about emergency preparedness events and news in general. But during emergencies we also use it to disseminate information. This newsletter is primarily for nonprofits and community based organizations that are interested in making their communities more resilient.
- Iskra Killgore: [07:08](#) Another good source of information is the advanced warning system and this is targeted towards organizations that serve people with disabilities and access and functional needs.
- Allison Pennisi: [07:20](#) Wow.
- Iskra Killgore: [07:20](#) And what I like about Notify is that it gives you information about a number of types of different emergencies, whether it's a transit disruption, a traffic disruption, a school closure, an emergency dealing with heat or hurricane. Really gives you information about whatever is going on in the City and it's a great source to stay informed. For our old school hip-hop listeners out there, if you don't know, now you know. Notify NYC.
- Allison Pennisi: [07:55](#) And I also think it's great that all of these resources that you've mentioned are free. And I think that that's also a great way for people to access their information. It doesn't cost time or money to be prepared. It doesn't cost time or money to stay informed as well.
- Allison Pennisi: [08:10](#) Shifting gears a little bit to week two [of National Preparedness Month]. You mentioned life saving skills. How can people get involved in their communities during National Preparedness Month?
- Iskra Killgore: [08:19](#) We have a great volunteer program called the Community Emergency Response Team or CERT for short. CERT is a group of volunteers who are trained to support first responders here in New York City. It's really a great way for people who are interested in helping their communities get involved.
- Iskra Killgore: [08:39](#) During National Preparedness Month, we also encourage New Yorkers to donate blood. The City needs 2,000 people to donate blood every day to maintain its supplies, since blood supplies are perishable and constantly need to be replenished.

- Omar Bourne: [08:54](#) Wow, 2,000 donations daily. I didn't realize that we needed that many people to donate blood. Now, part of the emergency plan that may often be overlooked is the financial portion, saving before an emergency. What advice do you have for our listeners on how they can save before an emergency?
- Iskra Killgore: [09:14](#) One thing that is very important is to have cash in small bills in your Go Bag. A Go Bag is a collection of items that everybody needs to have that is ready to go in case they need to leave their home in a hurry. We encourage people to keep a little cash in their go bag in case the ATMs are not working, or they can't access their bank account, it's very important.
- Iskra Killgore: [09:40](#) Another very important step is to have all your financial documents, copies of all your financial documents actually, in waterproof and fireproof containers. This includes mortgage or lease, tax returns, insurance information, anything like that because you don't want to lose your documents after an emergency because you want to have access to this information.
- Allison Pennisi: [10:07](#) One great thing about a Go Bag is not only does it contain your important documents, you could have food, water, you could add things like flashlights, extra batteries.
- Omar Bourne: [10:16](#) Batteries. Radio.
- Allison Pennisi: [10:18](#) First aid kit. Yes. There's so many great things and you could also customize it based on your own needs, and one thing that we always emphasize too is that pets need their own Go Bag.
- Omar Bourne: [10:28](#) That is correct.
- Allison Pennisi: [10:28](#) Because they are part of the family. So it's also important to make sure that Fido and Fluffy have them as well.
- Omar Bourne: [10:36](#) They have their own Go Bag, that's correct.
- Allison Pennisi: [10:36](#) All right. So we've talked about the weekly themes for National Preparedness Month, but let's get into the events that are planned. I've heard that there is a Senior ReadyFest that is going to kick off the month. Can you tell our listeners about that?
- Iskra Killgore: [10:49](#) Sure. Every September, it's a very busy month for us. We do over 80 events every year. This year we have a brand new event that we haven't done before. It's going to be in Southbridge Towers, which is a development on the Lower East Side. This

event is specifically for the older residents of the development and we're going to premier our two new Ready New York videos at this event. We will also have a lot of fun games, such as disaster-themed "Jeopardy!" And disaster-themed "Name This Tune" game. And it should be a lot of fun.

- Omar Bourne: [11:26](#) And I also heard that you're going to be inviting other partners, such as Con Ed, Department for the Aging, Fire Department, NYPD, so it looks like it's a lot of teamwork going into this event.
- Iskra Killgore: [11:40](#) Yes, that's correct, and Mayor's Office of Disabilities will also be there.
- Allison Pennisi: [11:44](#) Now you have a lot of great events lined up. I've heard that you're going to be doing events with the Mets and the Yankees and the Bronx Zoo, and the Staten Island Children's Museum. Tell our listeners about that.
- Iskra Killgore: [11:56](#) Yes, we are very happy to partner with all of these organizations for our National Preparedness Month event. This September 11, the Met players will be wearing our Emergency Management baseball caps at the game and our preparedness public service announcements will play at the stadium, so that's very exciting for us. A lot of people may not know about this but we have had a partnership with the Mets for a long time. For example, if there were to be a hurricane to hit New York City we can use CitiField parking lot as a staging area where we can assemble assets to help with emergency response and recovery.
- Iskra Killgore: [12:40](#) Then we are also partnering with the Yankees and that will be on September 14. We will be at the Yankee Stadium that night. This is the third year we are tabling in September with them. We are going to be distributing emergency preparedness guides and information and if you're at the stadium that day, come and look for our table.
- Iskra Killgore: [13:01](#) On September 16th, we will be in the Bronx Zoo. This is our Kids Preparedness Event. Our emergency preparedness superhero, Ready Girl, will be there and we are going to have a lot of fun games and activities for children.
- Iskra Killgore: [13:14](#) Then on September 22nd, we're having our Pet and Service Animals Preparedness Event, which is going to be here in Brooklyn, and it will be in front of Brooklyn Borough Hall. This is a great event for people who have pets or service animals. If they want to learn more about how they can prepare their pet or service animal, they should stop by. And also our partners

from the Animal Planning Task Force will be at that event as well.

- Iskra Killgore: [13:44](#) And the end, on September 29th, we are going to close off the month with our Family Preparedness Event in the Staten Island Children's Museum. We sponsor free admission at the museum that day, and we are going to have a lot of activities for the entire family. And again, Ready Girl will be there, and she will be doing presentations for children, and we are going to have many other fun activities as well, so it should be a fun month.
- Omar Bourne: [14:11](#) A jam-packed month filled with lots of what sounds like exciting events. I love that and at the end of this month, it sounds as if New Yorkers, if they attend these events, will be very prepared before an emergency and they'll have the information that they need to be prepared before an emergency and I love that.
- Omar Bourne: [14:33](#) Now with New York City being one of the most diverse cities in this nation, how important are these partnerships that we have with the Bronx Zoo, with the Staten Island Children's Museum, the Mets and the Yankees in helping to prepare different communities within New York City?
- Iskra Killgore: [14:51](#) It's absolutely crucial. I said in the beginning that every New Yorker needs to have an emergency support network. It's very similar for us. As Omar said, New York is extremely diverse. It's a very big city and we can't do it on our own. That's why we engage our partners in the community and also in businesses to help us spread the word.
- Allison Pennisi: [15:14](#) I love that. I know we talk about this a lot with preparedness, that there's a continuum of preparedness. It starts with the individual, it starts with the New Yorker, but then it expands to the community and by working with our partners to help share this message, we can make sure that our communities are prepared as well. So I think that that is really great.
- Omar Bourne: [15:33](#) Now Iskra, for our listeners who would like to find out more about National Preparedness Month, where can they go?
- Iskra Killgore: [15:40](#) The best place would be our website, NYC.gov/emergencymanagement. You can find out about our events. You can also sign up for the Community Preparedness Newsletter, which also has a lot of information about National Preparedness Month. You can also find a lot of information about the national campaign at ready.gov.

Omar Bourne: [16:02](#) Wonderful.

Allison Pennisi: [16:02](#) Very cool. For our listeners, National Preparedness Month is a time of year where we remind New Yorkers to be prepared for emergencies, but you should be prepared all year round. As Iskra mentioned, visit NYC.gov/emergencymanagement to learn more.

Allison Pennisi: [16:17](#) That's this edition of "Prep Talk." If you like what you heard, you can listen any time online or through your favorite RSS feed. Until next time, stay safe and prepared.