

Speaker 1: [00:07](#) 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. From the Emergency Management Department in the city that never sleeps, here are your hosts, Omar Bourne, and Allison Pennisi.

Omar Bourne: [00:25](#) Hello everyone, thank you for listening. I'm Omar Bourne.

Allison Pennisi: [00:29](#) 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 can also follow us on social media.

Omar Bourne: [00:38](#) That's, right Allison, in this episode we're talking about a very important, and dare I say, a hot topic. I'm going to pause there for a minute, because this is how we know that you've written this script, because somehow you think that I would say a hot topic.

Allison Pennisi: [00:54](#) I think you would say hot topic. I'm taking full credit for this, but yes, you would say something like this.

Omar Bourne: [01:00](#) All right.

Allison Pennisi: [01:00](#) All right.

Omar Bourne: [01:01](#) Today, we're going to be talking about fire safety and prevention. A very important topic here in New York City.

Allison Pennisi: [01:06](#) That's right Omar, so the New York City Fire Department not only provides fire protection and other critical public safety services to residents and visitors throughout the five boroughs, it also continuously works to educate the public in fire, life safety, and disaster preparedness, along with enforcing public safety codes.

Allison Pennisi: [01:25](#) Here to break it all down for us, and talk about fire safety and prevention, is Fabricio Caro, Director of Community Affairs at FDNY, and FDNY Lieutenant, Michael Kozo. Gentlemen, welcome to Prep Talk.

Fabricio Caro: [01:37](#) Thank you for having us.

Michael Kozo: [01:39](#) Thank you very much.

Omar Bourne: [01:40](#) Fabricio, I want to get started with you. Now the FDNY has a wide range of programs to help New Yorkers become "FDNY

smart," from fire safety education materials and presentations, to state-of-the-art learning center. Can you walk your listeners through these initiatives?

- Fabricio Caro: [01:56](#) Yeah, definitely, just to begin, without support from our FDNY Foundation, all these initiatives would not be possible, so we also want to thank them and acknowledge them. The department has taken a fundamental approach of basically bringing forth fire and life safety education to the forefront of communities, honestly working directly with leaders, either it be with houses of worship, or faith-based organizations, community organizations, schools across the board of bringing this message of overall prevention to communities throughout the city. Our firefighters, our fire officers, paramedics, EMTs basically have established a system of trainings, which encompass fire safety and CPR. On the fire safety and our fire safety unit provides year-round trainings that are at no cost to the community-based organizations, in which we provide an array of different presentations, either school-based, community-based tabling, or we even provide interactive experiences through our fire safety trailers, or our fire safety smokehouse, which basically provide the wide view of residential fire safety, and make it interactive and as fun as possible, and basically bring the message a lot stronger home.
- Fabricio Caro: [03:09](#) On our life safety and our CPR unit with our EMTs and paramedics, provide bystander compressions only. Basically training New Yorkers within a 30- to 40-minute timeframe, as long as you provide us space and open forum, we basically train them to be first responders, and to act as 911 in the event of a cardiac arrest, or stroke. Essentially, the department has taken a proactive stance of really building these partnerships with communities, and also working with agencies like New York City Emergency Management, on a wide array of different initiatives, to basically bring the message of safety across the board.
- Omar Bourne: [03:44](#) I know we've worked with your CPR teams for some of our outreach that we've had in the past, and I must say that many people are often ready and willing to participate and learn those basic CPR skills.
- Allison Pennisi: [03:59](#) Absolutely, like you said, New York City Emergency Management and FDNY have collaborated on a number of initiatives to prepare New Yorkers for emergencies. Something both of our agencies emphasize, is that part of being prepared is having an emergency plan, but also practicing this plan with

members of their household, and also their support network. Lieutenant Kozo, this question is for you, what are the key points you want New Yorkers to know about how to prevent fires, and how to stay safe if there is a fire?

- Michael Kozo: [04:28](#) Well, there's several tips that I'd like to emphasize today. One of the things is when you're cooking, so a lot of times what we're seeing is unattended cooking. A lot of fires are started, because people start cooking, and then they leave the kitchen to do other things. We want to emphasize to "stand by your pan," meaning if you're going to cook, that you should stay in the kitchen, and cook.
- Michael Kozo: [04:46](#) You also want to make sure that you have a three-foot area safe distance away from the stove, so that your children don't go anywhere near the stove while you are cooking. Another thing I would like to emphasize in the importance of electrical safety, we are seeing a lot of electrical fires right now. You want to make sure that you're not overloading your outlets.
- Michael Kozo: [05:04](#) You want to be safe when you're using extension cords and power strips. One of the main rules that we do emphasize in terms of electrical safety, is any item that heats or cools, should be plugged directly into the wall outlet. We're talking about air conditioners, space heaters, microwaves, toaster ovens, things like that. If it heats or cools, it should be plugged directly into the wall.
- Michael Kozo: [05:24](#) They do use a tremendous amount of power. Another very important thing I'd like to emphasize, is the importance of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. You should have a combination smoke and carbon monoxide alarm on every level of your home, plus a smoke only alarm in every bedroom. You want to make sure that you're testing these alarms once a month by pressing the test button.
- Michael Kozo: [05:45](#) Also, if you do still have the older alarms, when you need to change the battery, you want to make sure you change those batteries twice a year. A good way to remember that, is to change the batteries when you change the clocks. If you do go to one of these newer alarms, they do have new alarms out now, that if you do buy a smoke alarm, it's a ten year sealed unit.
- Michael Kozo: [06:02](#) Meaning that once you turn the alarm on, it is good for up to 10 years, and it runs on a lithium-ion battery. You no longer have to worry about changing the batteries, which is a very good

thing. Another thing I'd like to emphasize, is the importance of closing the door. If you do have a fire in your home, you want to make sure that you close the door on the way out.

Michael Kozo: [06:20](#) By closing the door, you're containing the fire within your apartment, allowing everybody else in the building to escape safely. It also helps the fire department when we're coming into the apartment, as we're approaching the door, we're not running into all this heat and smoke, and we don't have to worry about using our oxygen before we get into the fire.

Michael Kozo: [06:38](#) That definitely helps everybody all around, so you definitely want to make sure that you do close the door on your way out if you do have a fire. Also, if you lose power, we want to make sure that you're not using candles as a light source. The main rule of thumb if you are going to use a candle, is you should be blowing out the candle when you leave the room that the candle is burning in.

Michael Kozo: [06:57](#) However, one of the things we do highly recommend, is that everybody move to a flameless candle. A flameless candle is a lot safer, there's no flame involved. If you leave it burning no big deal, what's going to happen, the battery dies, and you just have to replace the battery. That's a really good thing, and the last thing I do one want to emphasize, is to call 911 if there is any type of emergency.

Michael Kozo: [07:16](#) A lot of people hesitate to call 911, they're afraid to call 911. They're afraid they're gonna get in trouble, or they think that they can handle the emergency themselves. We don't want people to feel that way. You want to be comfortable calling 911 in any type of emergency. This way you get the ball rolling, and get us there as soon as possible.

Omar Bourne: [07:35](#) A lot of information to unpack here, and I like what you said about "stand by your pan."

Allison Pennisi: [07:42](#) You think of the country song, "Stand By Your Man."

Omar Bourne: [07:48](#) It's just such an interesting way of phrasing that. It's so important, because you get into the habit of cooking, and you're around the kitchen, and then for those who have kids, a kid might call, or you might be distracted by the television. A natural part of you just wants to leave the kitchen, and do other things. It's really important that you listen to this advice, and stay where you are, bring a stool if you can.

Omar Bourne: [08:17](#) I guess sit around if you get tired standing, but really stick around, and stand by your pan.

Allison Pennisi: [08:22](#) Stand by your pan. One of the other things that Lieutenant Kozo just emphasized that for our listeners, there's a public service announcement that the FDNY put out called "Close The Door." Being safe in every language, and it's a great video. If you haven't seen it, please go to [NYC.gov/fdny](http://NYC.gov/fdny), and also check out the video on YouTube as well. It is a really great, simple way for people to understand how to say safe during a fire, so excellent point, I'm really glad you brought that up.

Omar Bourne: [08:52](#) Yeah, these are simple tips, I mean when you even look at not overloading your power outlets, we often want to stick as many power strips into, or cords into the outlets as possible, but we shouldn't be doing that.

Michael Kozo: [09:07](#) Definitely not, you want to avoid that whenever you can, absolutely.

Omar Bourne: [09:11](#) Now we know people, as Lieutenant Kozo said, should call 911 in an emergency, and evacuate immediately if you smell gas, or if you see smoke or a fire. The question many people, New Yorkers also ask, is whether a building is fireproof? What that means, if a fire occurs in their building, can you explain?

Michael Kozo: [09:34](#) Sure Omar, no problem, so one of the basic rules of thumb for fireproof versus a non-fireproof building, is a non-fireproof building is typically six stories or less, or under 75 feet in height. Whereas, a fireproof building is normally more than six stories, and over 75 feet in height. One of the giveaways usually for a fireproof versus a non-fireproof, is a non-fireproof building will have fire escapes, whereas a fireproof building will not.

Michael Kozo: [10:01](#) Now there are always exceptions to these rules, but those are the basic rules of thumb in terms of a fireproof building versus a non-fireproof. However, if you are unsure whether your building is fireproof or not, it is required to be posted in the lobby of your building, so you can always check in the lobby of your building, and there will be a posting up saying that your building is fireproof or non-fireproof.

Michael Kozo: [10:22](#) The main question, is what does that mean to the resident? If a building is non-fireproof, what is that telling you? That's telling you that the fire can spread no matter where it starts. If the fire's on the first floor, it can easily spread to the fifth floor without anything to stop it. Regardless of where the fire is in a

non-fireproof building, whether it's in your apartment or not, you must exit the building no matter what.

- Michael Kozo: [10:46](#) That's why we talk about the importance of keeping that door closed if the fire is in your apartment, so that you can allow the rest of the residents in your building to escape safely. If your building is fireproof, we're talking about a whole different ballgame now. Your apartments are surrounded by fireproofing, fire resistant material, which is made to contain the fire within your apartment.
- Michael Kozo: [11:10](#) The basic rule of thumb, is if the fire is in your apartment in a fireproof building, obviously you need to leave your apartment, and you want to make sure that you close the door on your way out, keeping the hallways free of contamination from the smoke and the fire. However, if the fire is not in your apartment, and you live in a fireproof building, it is usually safer to stay in your apartment, okay?
- Michael Kozo: [11:32](#) A lot of people think that the fire's in their building, and they need to leave, but the whole point of the fireproof building, is to contain that fire. You're definitely safer to stay in your apartment, if the fire is not in your apartment. What you may see sometimes, is some smoke seeping through your doorway, if the fire maybe is on your floor, or in the apartment next to you all.
- Michael Kozo: [11:50](#) What you can do, is take a damp towel, and you can shove it underneath your doorway to stop the smoke from coming in. However, like we did mention before, do not be afraid to call 911 if there is a fire in your building. Maybe you see some smoke coming into your apartment, you call 911, you let them know that there is a fire there, and we will send someone to your apartment just to make sure that everything is safe, and that you are still safe in your apartment.
- Omar Bourne: [12:12](#) Yeah, I think one of the key things here, is that when people see that smoke start to seep under their door, I think they panic, and think that the fire ...
- Allison Pennisi: [12:21](#) The instinct is that they have to get out, right, absolutely.
- Omar Bourne: [12:23](#) Exactly, yeah.
- Michael Kozo: [12:24](#) Right, so we definitely just want to emphasize that you can stop that smoke by putting that damp towel underneath the

doorway. You can also put some duct tape around the edges of the door, so that none of the smoke does come in.

- Allison Pennisi: [12:35](#) Really great points, I feel like just having both of you here right now, I've become more "FDNY smart," see, I can add my own jokes to this bit. My question, Fabricio, if you can answer this, how can people request a presentation from the FDNY, and get more information?
- Fabricio Caro: [12:52](#) I guess the main avenue of how to request, is going through our website [fdnysmart.org](http://fdnysmart.org), which on there you have the option of either requesting a fire safety presentation, simple questionnaire, asks the type of organization, number in attendance, and basically contact info for the organization itself. That's also the same for our CPR if you want a CPR training, there's a whole questionnaire as well, which then is directed to the respective units.
- Fabricio Caro: [13:19](#) For fire safety also, if you want to contact them directly, if it's not through Internet, or through online, you can contact the office directly, 718-281- 3870 for fire safety education. If you want mobile CPR, and you want to connect with them directly as well via phone, 718-281-3888.
- Omar Bourne: [13:42](#) Fabricio, I want to go back to FDNY education that you mentioned earlier and the smokehouse at schools. Can you talk a little bit about why it's important to start preparing people from a young age for fire prevention, and giving them the information, and what that does to carry on as they get older? I know before we came, before we started recording, Allison gave a cool little story about remembering when she was younger playing, and our experience in the smokehouse, and what that meant for her now that she's just a few years older.
- Fabricio Caro: [14:20](#) Well, I mean I'll also chime in with, I'll have Lieutenant Kozo chime in, but honestly, with any interactive experience, and when you're looking at younger kids, it's about making it memorable. Ingraining them, basically ingraining in them the message in itself, because they themselves are going to serve as carriers to bring forth the safety education back home.
- Fabricio Caro: [14:41](#) If it's as simple as stand by your pan, or if you teach them about the importance of maintaining a working smoke alarm, and making it in a fun manner, they're basically going to hold onto it, and take it from the classroom back to the house. I think Lieutenant Kozo, I don't know if you want to add more in terms

of the smokehouse, and exactly what that instills within children.

- Michael Kozo: [15:01](#) Just to breakdown the smokehouse really quick, basically it's a 60 foot trailer that we do have. What we do, is we darken it inside, we turn off all the lights. We do have smoke machines, so we smoke out the trailer. What we do, is we teach the children to stay low on their hands and knees. They want to stay underneath the smoke, as low as possible.
- Michael Kozo: [15:21](#) We teach them to keep a hand on the wall, which will guide them to a safe exit. We also do have a hot door inside, so we teach the children to feel the door for heat before they open it. Then we guide them, and they try and find their way out of the trailer. It is a really good thing to practice with the children. This way, when they do go home, they take this home with them, and they can teach their brothers and sisters, and other relatives, and even their parents if they don't know.
- Michael Kozo: [15:47](#) If it does ever happen that they do have a fire in their home, they know exactly how to escape, and how to react.
- Fabricio Caro: [15:51](#) Yeah, and I mean think about it, the curiosity of children, especially with fires as well. I think we have to target essentially that age range just to basically instill and make sure that, that message is hitting home stronger than ever.
- Allison Pennisi: [16:05](#) Yeah, I'm still remembering being in a smokehouse, and going in, and having to put the back of my hand on the door to feel if it was warm. We had another door that I remember, it was okay, well it feels cold, but let's open it, and the smoke came out, and we had to close it, and say, "Okay we have to leave, how do you escape when there's a fire in your house?"
- Allison Pennisi: [16:24](#) We all practiced, and we had firefighters help us get out of the trailer, too.
- Omar Bourne: [16:28](#) Right.
- Allison Pennisi: [16:28](#) It's something that I remember just that basic, and I think it started when I was in kindergarten or first grade. Now that, as you said, I'm a few years older, I still remember what to do. Now I can educate my own kids on what to do.
- Omar Bourne: [16:41](#) The good thing about that, is that the kids then come home and tell the parents what they've learned, because it was engaging. Then it reminds the parents that they should prepare as well.

Now, for our listeners, if you don't have a smokehouse, the information here, and the takeaway, is that you can just take this information and get out into your community wherever you are, and educate people about fire prevention, that's key.

- Fabricio Caro: [17:12](#) Yeah, one thing to add I guess with the FDNY Smart [campaign], and actually that's a good point about taking this information, all our sheets that the educators provide at any presentation can be downloaded or uploaded within our FDNY Smart website. The beauty of the website, is that all those materials can be translated into over 80 languages. Basically across the board being able to connect with communities from all types of populations, or diverse populations that we serve.
- Allison Pennisi: [17:37](#) We talk about that a lot, is that New York City's home to more than 8 million people, different languages, different backgrounds. Being able to provide these basic lifesaving tips in other languages, is really important. It's great that FDNY has worked on that.
- Omar Bourne: [17:51](#) Fabricio, Lieutenant, we appreciate you guys being on the show with us today. Any final words before we close it up?
- Fabricio Caro: [18:01](#) I mean fire prevention week is coming up, please stay connected with us through social media at FDNY. Please keep on the lookout of the various locations where our fire safety team will be throughout the city, providing fire safety information.
- Michael Kozo: [18:16](#) Along with that, I do know that fire prevention week, like Fabricio said, is coming up, but just keep in mind that every day should be a day for fire prevention, not just during fire prevention week.
- Omar Bourne: [18:26](#) Wonderful.
- Allison Pennisi: [18:26](#) Yeah, absolutely, so for our listeners, you can visit [NYC.gov/fdny](http://NYC.gov/fdny), or [fdnysmart.org](http://fdnysmart.org). That's this edition of "Prep Talk." If you like what you heard, you can listen anytime online, or through your favorite RSS feed. Until next time, stay safe and prepared.