

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 am Omar Bourne.

Allison Pennisi: [00:28](#) 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 can also follow us on social media.

Omar Bourne: [00:38](#) If you are an emergency management enthusiast, this is the episode for you. If you're not, stick around because you're going to gain a wealth of knowledge from the firepower that's in the studio with us today. This episode, we're talking about Big City Emergency Managers. That's a nonprofit organization that brings together emergency management leaders from across the country to share best practices and to ensure these areas can better prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies.

Allison Pennisi: [01:09](#) That's right, Omar. Our three guests are not only part of Big City Emergency Managers, but each are leading some of the nation's largest metropolitan areas. Please welcome to our show Barb Graff, Director of the City Seattle's Office of Emergency Management. We also have Tom Sivak, Deputy Director of the City of Chicago's Office of Emergency Management, and last but not least, New York City Emergency Manager, Commissioner Joseph Esposito. Thank you all for being here.

Omar Bourne: [01:35](#) We'd like to say that at the heart of emergency management is coordination. Commissioner Esposito, I'm going to start with you. Can you tell our listeners how Big City Emergency Managers achieve coordination?

Joseph Esposito: [01:46](#) Sure. Thank you, Omar. Let me start by thanking our partners, including Barb and Tom for joining us here in New York City, for the Big City Emergency Managers Conference. The goal of Big City Emergency Managers is to bring emergency managers from the nation's largest municipalities together to share information and resources, and to discuss areas of mutual concern. From Seattle to Chicago, from Houston to New York City, it's a great way for emergency managers to network and to share best practices and lessons learned so that we can make our own

cities better prepared and resilient. During this week we'll be hearing about Hurricane Michael, be hearing about the New York City steam pipe blast. We'll be hearing about terror attacks. We're getting a presentation on urban search and rescue teams.

- Joseph Esposito: [02:37](#) What I find is, when we do this, we always come away with learning something. There's always something that we can add. Even if it's a minor point, we always come back with being better prepared for what's going to attack us here in the city, whether it's a man made event, or a natural disaster.
- Omar Bourne: [02:57](#) Wonderful. Barb, how about you? Coordination, what does it mean?
- Barb Graff: [03:00](#) I'll just add two things. I agree, obviously, with everything the Commissioner's already said. I'll add two things to the importance of Big City Emergency Managers. One is, we also tend to attract, since when you put all of us in a room together, we represent nearly a quarter of the nation's population. We attract gravity by asking cabinet member officials, or the FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] administrator, or others to be in the room and talk through policy with us. It's even more effective that way. Plus, we're creating the relationship with the federal government, that at some point we're all going to count on.
- Barb Graff: [03:32](#) Second, I want to give a shout-out. We have a handful of private sector partners who help sponsor our meetings. Two of those sponsors, Target and Esri, help put together some experiences so that emerging leaders from within our programs, future leaders of emergency management programs, are capable of learning those same lessons of coordination, policy development, leadership, and other things. It's really a tremendous experience.
- Omar Bourne: [03:59](#) Tom, last but not least.
- Tom Sivak: [04:01](#) One other thing that I would say that we focus on is, we have a network throughout the entire nation. While we have numerous great problem solvers within our respective jurisdictions, one of the greatest things that we can have is we can always pick up the phone, and there's always someone across this country that's going to answer your call, especially when you have a complex issue or problem that you want to accomplish.

Allison Pennisi: [04:20](#) I love that it's a shared business. What are some of the activities that Big City Emergency Managers engage in to help the field grow and develop? Commissioner, let's start with you.

Joseph Esposito: [04:31](#) The field will only grow when we work together. That's what's so important about getting together a couple times a year. It sets up the network for us to, as Tom said, we can pick up the phone and call somebody and say, "Hey, we have this situation. We know you had a similar one. What did you do?" We have that face/name recognition, so it really is great. Big City Emergency Managers not only allow top decision makers to share best practices, but we also advocate for improvement to the field in critical emergency management issues. For example, we just sent a letter to the leaders of the FCC regarding the WEA, the Wireless Emergency Alert System, and as a result of that letter, there were some major changes. The system is much better used now. We can add more characters, and even get sent photos. That's a result of us sitting down, talking, realizing there was a limit to it, and now the nation, the federal government, has seen our request and acted on it.

Allison Pennisi: [05:26](#) Barb, what about you?

Barb Graff: [05:26](#) I would add, I was going to mention Wireless Emergency Alerts also, but the Regional Catastrophic Grant Program was one of, I think, the most valuable experimental grants the federal government ever tried to create. A couple years after Hurricane Katrina, the Department of Homeland Security did an audit of urban areas across the country, chose 10 regional areas to say, "Take your emergency plans all the way up the catastrophic level," which we did. The astounding thing I thought, though, it was usually cities at the core of those regions who not only shared best practices and lessons with each other, but we made sure that we weren't duplicating. You didn't have New York and Seattle and Chicago, and Honolulu and Norfolk all doing exactly the same plan. We talked with each other to make the best possible use of those grant dollars. We're actually advocating that grant program come back into existence again. It's all about planning for these highly unusual events that always tax us the most.

Allison Pennisi: [06:23](#) Tom, what about you?

Tom Sivak: [06:24](#) I think there's two things. One is the emerging leader program that the Big City Emergency Managers program has. I always see it that we're on the cusp when it comes to leadership. Right now when we see the emerging leader program, we see the

next generation of emergency managers coming into play. It's a really good opportunity to see the ideas that come out of these programs and see how they can continue to grow within the programs. The other thing too is that whenever we have exercises, we always find opportunities to try and engage within our cities, whether it's a virtual aspect, or whether it's being physically in another city, where they may have different hazards or risks that are associated with it. When we're able to get together and work through these kinds of problems, it really gives us another set of skills that we're able to leverage when we have incidents.

Omar Bourne:

[07:10](#)

All great points. To the Commissioner's point about the Wireless Emergency Alert system, those changes are coming up in May 2019, and also in November. As the Commissioner said, the character count is going to increase from 90 to 360, and messages will also be available in Español as well. That's Spanish for those who may not know what Español is. This question is for everyone. Tom, I'm going to start with you since you've been going last. While big cities might share similar characteristics, each may face different hazards, as we know. For example, Seattle, there's landslides, there's volcanoes. In New York City, we have hurricanes. Chicago, may experience winter weather. What would you say are the biggest challenges for your respective cities?

Tom Sivak:

[08:04](#)

Some of the challenges that we have started to see are that when we have these large disasters, these large instances taking place, we're starting to be the receivers of people who are seeking a temporary place to live. They're seeking a different set of services, such as food, clothing, shelter, maybe even relocating to the city for a longer term. When we had the bigger disasters, and the unfortunate events in Puerto Rico is a prime example, we saw many people who became residents or became temporary residents or full-time residents of the city. Starting to think about these cascading events that are impacting us on a different side when it's sunny and 70 outside, when the disaster is 2,000 miles away from us, is one of the things that we're seeing as a bigger challenge. When we start looking at these large-type incidents, like the earthquakes in Chicago. We think about the New Madrid fault. We don't think about earthquakes all too much in the city, but one of the things that we always think about are, what are the cascading effects of a New Madrid event, and how are we going to be able to provide those services to these residents or people who are affected.

Barb Graff: [09:03](#) I'm going to build on what Tom just said. In Hurricane Katrina, we were 2,500 miles away from the Gulf Coast states, where 90,000 square miles and I can't remember how many people were affected. 5,000 people came to our county 2,500 miles away, not on military planes, just they heard it was a good place to be cared for. Church buses went and picked them up. Onesies, and twosies, relatives came, and 3,000 of them still live there. It's good for us when we're talking about catastrophic level events. They really need a systematic way of planning for them and recovering from them. I think that Big City Emergency Managers do a great job of that.

Barb Graff: [09:42](#) My biggest nightmare is an earthquake, which doesn't come with a hurricane warning. One of our biggest challenges in the Pacific Northwest is the fact that we have to convince people of something that has a very low frequency, but enormous impact. That's always a challenge, where I always sound like "Saturday Night Live's" Debbie Downer when I talk to absolutely everybody. "Got to have this, got to have this." It is a big challenge. We try and ride everyone else's emergencies around the country and around the world, quite frankly, saying, "Here's what the earthquake looked like in Japan. Here's what it looked like in Haiti. Here's what it looked like in Christchurch, New Zealand. Now look at the hurricanes and you can have the same kind of devastation. That's why we need to be ready."

Joseph Esposito: [10:20](#) I think our biggest challenge for me, is to keep up with the times. You can't get comfortable and rest on your laurels. We have dozens of plans. We got to keep those plans up to date. I'm sure we can open a plan right now, read something and say, "Why is that in there? It's outdated," or "Something is in that plan that was not in that plan, that we have to deal with." A few years ago, I guess more than a few years ago, but cyber threat was nothing we even had to worry about. Now it's probably the thing that keeps me up at night. A cyberattack can shut down a multitude of systems in this city. It can affect our transit, our water supplies, electricity, everything. We got to stay on top of that. I think our biggest challenge for me, and I think the other emergency managers is staying up with current threats and the needs of the city.

Barb Graff: [11:13](#) Can I add one more that you made me think about, Commissioner? That is, the Rockefeller Foundation has done a nice job of talking about shocks and stressors. Most people think logically you plan for the shocks. The hurricanes, the tornadoes, the floods, the earthquakes. A stressor these days is homelessness throughout the entire country. If I needed to

open shelters for an earthquake tonight, I would start with needing to shelter 4,500 people, and then increase from there. That's another reason I think it's good for us to get together and talk about how are we handling the kind of daily emergencies that affect our programs and our cities as well.

Tom Sivak: [11:48](#) Can I add one other thing to that?

Omar Bourne: [11:48](#) Of course.

Tom Sivak: [11:48](#) One of the things that we talk about in the office is, emergency management, we see it as a problem solving aspect. We're being dealt complex problems that may not necessarily affect us as subject matter experts. Then we have to go out and find that information. The Commissioner's point, cybersecurity. When I was hired in, cybersecurity wasn't even thought of. Now when we look at cybersecurity, we have to try and put it in the lenses of an emergency manager, which to us, we always talk about the consequence management piece of it. As the Commissioner was talking about emerging threats and emerging incidents, staying on top of that is definitely something that is going to continue to try to keep us ahead of the game, or near it.

Omar Bourne: [12:32](#) Lots of wonderful points. Switching gears a little. Barb, this question is for you. I know you're a member of the Emergency Management Accreditation Program Commission. For our listeners, this accreditation program, or EMAP, as we like to call it, establishes measurable standards of excellence for the emergency management program. Barb, can you break that down a little more for those who might be listening?

Barb Graff: [12:58](#) I'd be happy to. Emergency management compared to something like law enforcement or firefighting is a relatively young profession. People have been doing emergency management, but professionalizing it has been relatively recent. When I started in the business almost 30 years ago, there were no college or university degrees. There wasn't even high school mention of the idea of emergency management. FEMA wasn't offering the online courses they have today. They were offering actually very few in person courses to learn how to do emergency management. Some highly decorated veteran emergency managers from around the country came together and said, "How would we define what a holistic emergency management program should be all about?" It should be about studying your hazards and alerting and warning your community appropriately. Having operational plans and a way to coordinate. Logistics and resource management systems.

- Barb Graff: [13:51](#) They built those into a set of standards. The standards evolve. Every three years they're updated. Currently, there's 64 standards that an emergency management program is expected to be able to meet. The first thing you do is take a look at the standards themselves. It's a few pages long. For those emergency managers who think, "This something on top of what I do. I don't have time for this," it's exactly what you do. It's exactly what emergency managers do.
- Barb Graff: [14:16](#) Do a self-assessment and find out, "How robust are my protocols for alert and warning, and operational readiness, et cetera?" Then you invite in third party professional assessors. Those of us who have experience in those different aspects of emergency management, and we assess what it is you put into your documentation. We watch you do radio tests. We visit your alternative emergency operation centers. We interview your stakeholders, and find out is this really what they say it is. Then you get a report that goes eventually to an emergency management accreditation program review committee. They make a recommendation to the commission, and if found that you're compliant in all 64 standards, then you achieve accreditation for a five-year period.
- Barb Graff: [15:01](#) I'm thrilled to say that we just celebrated 15 years of accrediting programs, and accredited our 100th program this last March. We're picking up speed. More than 30 of the states around the nation are accredited. We now have international programs, like a Saudi Arabian hospital. We have federal level agencies, CDC, and FEMA region six. We've learned and proven it's a set of standards that are applicable to emergency management anywhere.
- Omar Bourne: [15:30](#) How long is this process from beginning to when you receive accreditation?
- Barb Graff: [15:34](#) Good question. It really depends on what state your emergency management program is in to begin with. I was with a neighboring city, Bellevue, Washington, when they were looking for a local program to be the pilot of trying on the state program, and was selected. I didn't do anything special. I just started documenting what I had. At the time, there was 54 standards, and my program was found compliant in 52 out of the 54 standards. That's before I even wrote a hazard mitigation plan. It was a well-evolved program, didn't take a lot to get to the final two standards.

- Barb Graff: [16:06](#) When I moved into Seattle, I inherited a program that was not well documented. A lot of people, Bob, and Susan, and someone who had all the knowledge in their head, they knew what to do because of their experience, but as soon as they retired or moved, we didn't have that. It took us some work. It took us several years worth of putting that kind of documentation together.
- Allison Pennisi: [16:28](#) We talk about this a lot, Omar, that winging it is not an emergency plan. It also applies to emergency management across the country. Even, like you said, a Saudi Arabian hospital, there is a quality assurance that is being done, which I think is really important, because there needs to be standards to make sure that we're all doing the right thing for not only the people who work here and live here, but the people who even visit here as well. I think that's great.
- Allison Pennisi: [16:53](#) Tom, this question is for you. You recently received the National Homeland Security Association's Leadership Award, which is very exciting. You talked about some of the challenges that the City of Chicago has faced, but what have you found to be the biggest lessons learned as a leader?
- Tom Sivak: [17:10](#) As a leader, a couple of things that I've found. First is empowering your team. One of the things that I've found is, when I empower them, they actually are the ones that come up with the solutions to the problems. Then they always remind me to trust in what they're doing, that they're going to get the job done. Being able to set expectations and then let them carry through is an amazing experience. The other thing is to listen. A lot of the time, as emergency managers, we might be A type personalities. We want to get out there, we want to coordinate, we want to make sure we're doing the best for our residents. At the same time, if we just sit back and listen, we'll know what the bigger picture is. It's one of the things that I've learned to be a valuable lesson as I've grown.
- Tom Sivak: [17:51](#) The other thing is explaining the reason why. When I came in with my team, especially as I was able to explain reasons why we were doing certain things. Especially with working with people who are from multiple different backgrounds, when everybody's working with different backgrounds, they might not necessarily know or understand a certain situation, especially if you have a lot of subject matter experts in the field. The last one is, it's okay to be wrong. A lot of times whenever I've been wrong, I've been able to look at the team and say, "I was wrong



on this one, so let's come up with a solution that's going to be better off."

- Omar Bourne: [18:31](#) I like what you said about listening, especially I know if you, Commissioner Esposito, you often emphasize how important it is for us to work with our partners in the community to improve the work of our agency. A huge part of that is listening to them, getting out there, and seeing what they have to say, and then seeing how we can implement it and use it for the betterment of the plans that we have for them. How does BCEM, Big City Emergency Managers support this goal of getting out into the communities and listening to what people have to say?
- Joseph Esposito: [19:10](#) The people here at this conference are our partners. They're not our community. Their community is all around the nation, but they are our partners. I always find that the answers to the problems, the best come from our partners or the people who are closest to it. Big cities brings us all together. These are the people that are closest. These are their agencies, the closest to a lot of the problems. I'm anxious to see what I'm going to learn from this week. I always come away from this conference learning something, and I'm really looking forward to it. Working with these folks. They've been in the business, as Barb said, 30 years. I'm a newbie. I've only been here four years. Barb, what, did you start when you were about five years old?
- Barb Graff: [19:50](#) Yes. [inaudible 00:19:51]
- Joseph Esposito: [19:53](#) I really am looking forward to a terrific week to learn, to share our experiences, but really I want to learn, so we here in New York City can better serve our folks.
- Barb Graff: [20:06](#) There are many things that Craig Fugate did when he was the FEMA administrator that I really admire. One of those is to introduce the concept of whole community planning. I think he used to use tornadoes, or some of the biggest tornadoes as a great example of, if you don't work with the major employers, who, the second they get damaged, they just pull up roots and leave, you've also taken away jobs, schools close, all kinds of different things happen. The whole idea about working with community is to find out what are the strengths and vulnerabilities within your community, and how do you pull out and capitalize on the strengths, and then knit together multiple solutions for the weaknesses.
- Barb Graff: [20:44](#) Both gentlemen are right, you can't do this without, in our case, the Red Cross, the Coast Guard, the hospitals, the universities.

Everybody has a role to play in emergency management. The most single important thing an emergency manager can do is to meet people we've never heard of before and find out what their role is, and then get them comfortable with it.

Allison Pennisi: [21:07](#) We've talked about this. The profession of emergency management, still a relatively new field. Commissioner, you may only have been with the agency for four years, but you've had a breadth of experience. We can all attest to that.

Omar Bourne: [21:17](#) Yes.

Allison Pennisi: [21:18](#) Emergency management, you also say, goes beyond local, state, federal government. It goes everywhere. It's even in the private sector now. We were talking about university and the career path is that emergency management is now something you can major in for undergrad or even graduate programs, which I also think is wonderful. This question is for all of you and Tom, I'm going to start with you. Where do you see the field in the next few years and beyond?

Tom Sivak: [21:42](#) One of the things that comes to mind is technology. Technology is going to start driving a lot more of the decision making processes, whether it's before a disaster to be able to do better modeling when it comes to any type of natural hazard event, or if it's during the response of trying to map out where people are being affected, utilizing crowdsourcing technology, which is still relatively new, or other technology like Bluetooth technology, or anything else like that, when there is during the response in the recovery period.

Tom Sivak: [22:12](#) One of the things I heard a long time ago was, "You're not graded on the response. You're graded on the recovery of a community." One of the things that we've talked about in terms of technology was, what would happen if you could map out where people were going and GPS where an emergency response vehicle, or a Salvation Army feeding truck is located? And being able to map to be more efficient, to be able to provide the services back to the community and help them recover quicker. Technology is going to drive a lot of that, but we have to be able to figure out how that's going to connect into programs that we may or may not be able to have access to, and bring it all together in one common operating picture so everybody is working off the same sheet of music, as opposed to different and disparate technological advances.

Allison Pennisi: [22:58](#) Barb, what about you?

Barb Graff: [23:00](#) I'll add two things. I agree that technology, such as earthquake early warning, you potentially can get seconds to a couple minutes warning if you use technology appropriately. What I want to add is, in the future of emergency management, we need to find a way to link into larger problems than our local communities. I think about sea level rise. The sea is not just rising on the Atlantic seaboard, and yet 60% of all Americans live in coastal communities now. This is a public and a private kind of situation. It affects our shipping, our ports, and everything else. We need to be able to, in emergency management, have a louder voice about the value of science based decision making and investing much more heavily in mitigation upfront. I have already what the second thing was. Commissioner Esposito is going to be smarter now.

Joseph Esposito: [23:53](#) The way I see us going is, I think as an agency, I think around the country it's true, I think we're being dependent on more. I know here in New York City, when I got here four years ago, we had 150 some odd people. We're up to over 250 now. The city is putting more and more responsibility on us. We're taking that responsibility. We're taking it and running with it. I'm thrilled that they're counting on us more so I see the ... Emergency Management as a bigger dog in the fight now. I really do see us growing and being more depended upon by ... I know here in New York City at least, that's the case. I think that's the case around the country.

Allison Pennisi: [24:34](#) I've actually even seen that myself too. When I've spoken to people about, "What is it that you do?" "I'm in emergency management." Now if I tell people that, people know exactly what it is I'm talking about. Like, "Is your agency similar to FEMA?" "Well, it is." Then we explain we deal with different complexities. We work really closely with our communities and things like that. We talked about whole community planning. A few years ago, if you were to ask somebody off the street, "Do you know what emergency management is?", they'd be like, "I don't know. They manage emergencies? What do they do?"

Joseph Esposito: [25:05](#) That's a big part. What you said is so true, because that's part of what we want to do here in New York, get our message out, what we do, what we're capable of doing, how we can help you be informed, get ready for and respond during an emergency. I think that's what we're really doing a good job at lately. We're getting our message out more, over 1,000 seminars a year we're doing. I want that to be over 2,000. I want to get out, and sorry folks, but I want you out there more and more, and getting to the people that need us the most. That was the big issue. The

people that needed us the most, the people who are the poorest, the hardest workers, new immigrants, they did not know what we can provide for them, how we can help them. We're finally getting that message out. Not as much as I'd like, but to some degree. We got to do more of that. That's my mission going forward.

Barb Graff: [25:58](#)

I'm going to tag on that one as well, in that our agency also is being looked at to be able to be the coordinating agency for many different types of instances. One of those is when the teachers go on strike. Most people think you activate your emergency operations center when the flood waters are in the street, or buildings have toppled, or a major transportation accident has happened. In our community at least, and probably many others, when the teachers are on strike and the schools don't open, a really indecent number of kids don't have a safe place to go during the day, or they're not fed. To our mayor, that's a disaster.

Barb Graff: [26:34](#)

We have, several times now, opened up parks, rec centers, and other types of community shelters that we can use to provide emergency daycare. Same thing if people need to stay home and take care of the kids, because the teachers are on strike, then it disrupts the economy and everything else. I think more and more leaders are recognizing the value of people whose basic purpose is inter-agency coordination.

Tom Sivak: [27:01](#)

One thing that absolutely, and what the Commissioner said and what Barb said, is 100% true. What we do well is bring people together. Every time we turn around and we have a major incident ... Last year, I go to Puerto Rico again, but when the unfortunate events of Puerto Rico came in, our mayor said our doors are open. When our mayor said our doors are open, we had to come up with plans and make sure that we were ready to receive whoever came through that door and provide a level of assistance that is expected from our residents. We have a duty to our residents to be able to provide the services. When we have these events, we have bring people together. We brought together 60 agencies from across the city in non-traditional formats. I didn't even know some of these agencies and what they could do. Within two days, we had a laundry list of agencies that were able to support people who were affected by a disaster. It's one of the things that I believe is what we can always do is, bring people together with just an email or a phone call.

- Omar Bourne: [28:02](#) I like that. What we do well is bring people together. You've mentioned that the field has evolved and grown to the point where kids are now studying emergency management. My question is what advice would you give to one of the emerging leaders, or to those who are interested in pursuing emergency management?
- Joseph Esposito: [28:28](#) I think it's a great field. As Allison pointed out, I did have some history with civil service before I came here.
- Omar Bourne: [28:36](#) A lot of history. Not some.
- Joseph Esposito: [28:40](#) I worked in a different agency for 40 some odd years, and what I did was help people. What I'm doing now is helping people. There's no better job. The advice I would give to people that want to commit to this field, there's no better profession, no better occupation than one where you help your fellow man, woman. There is no better occupation. Emergency management, that's what we do. We do it every single day. We get them ready, we keep them informed, and we have them make plans. It's very selfish, because you're helping people and you're feeling good about it, so it's a great job. It's a great profession. I would encourage everybody, if you have any kind of thought about getting into this field, do it. It's very, very rewarding.
- Barb Graff: [29:29](#) I would offer there's a free way of learning a lot about emergency management, so you can take online FEMA courses, and I highly recommend that. I'd also suggest going to conferences, which are usually organized specifically for networking opportunities. If you have the opportunity to go to the International Association of Emergency Management Conference for instance, that's a great way to network with thousands of emergency managers across the country. If that's a little out of your budget range, most states usually have a local or a regional similar type of an event that you can attend. You get jobs meeting people. I know when we have open positions, we have nearly 300 applicants for every position. The way to get known is to make eye contact and have a handshake.
- Barb Graff: [30:13](#) Finally, I highly recommend doing a volunteer project or an internship with any kind of emergency management program. A municipal program like ours, or a hospital emergency management program, or with the Red Cross. That experience of helping people really weighs a lot on a resume.
- Omar Bourne: [30:31](#) Tom?

Tom Sivak: [30:32](#) Emergency management covers the private, public, and non-profit sector. It spans the entire enterprise, more or less. When people are saying, "What we can do? What can I do to get in?", the first thing I always say is, be willing to move, pick up and move. Personally, I switched six jobs in seven years. That's really bad on a resume, but my whole goal, my life goal was to get to the City of Chicago and work in a major metropolitan area, so I had to move. One of the things I tell people are, watch for the jobs. Apply for the jobs. Get that experience, especially with what Barb was offering in terms of the free classes. Also too, be open, because where you start is never going to be where you end up.

Omar Bourne: [31:17](#) Well said. A lot of great advice and great points. We're going to move into our rapid-fire Q&A for our listeners. This is the first time that we're doing this, but I'm sure we're going to get some insightful answers. I'm going to let Allison start it off.

Allison Pennisi: [31:34](#) I'm very excited about this. We're going to go around the room. Commissioner Esposito, we'll start with you. What do you think is the most important emergency preparedness tip? You know we have a lot of them, but what is your top?

Joseph Esposito: [31:45](#) Staying informed. You've got to be informed. If you have the information, current information, or if you've made your plans, then you can put them into place. I think having the right information, accurate information in a timely fashion is probably one of the most important things you could have.

Allison Pennisi: [32:00](#) Barb?

Barb Graff: [32:00](#) Make friends with your family, with community. Social capital gets you through disasters.

Allison Pennisi: [32:05](#) Tom?

Tom Sivak: [32:06](#) Know how to communicate in times of disaster. Everybody has a phone, if not two of them. Whenever we're dependent on that, know how we're going to be able to communicate if that's not working.

Omar Bourne: [32:15](#) Question number two. Tom, I'm going to start with you. What is one emergency item you can't live without?

Tom Sivak: [32:20](#) An air mattress. My first disaster, I tried sleeping on a cot, and I realized it was like sleeping on concrete, so now wherever I go I

always carry an air mattress with me, and I know I can always at least get 20 minutes of sleep.

- Omar Bourne: [32:31](#) I like that. Barb?
- Barb Graff: [32:33](#) Water. Makes me thirsty thinking about it.
- Omar Bourne: [32:36](#) Commissioner?
- Joseph Esposito: [32:37](#) These damn cellphones that I have to carry all the time.
- Allison Pennisi: [32:45](#) We have a lot of them. Commissioner, what do you consider your best success in the field?
- Joseph Esposito: [32:49](#) The increased outreach that we've accomplished over the last four years. I came in with that mission, to get our message out and what we do and how we do it, and who we can do it for, and I think we've increased that outreach to a point where it's acceptable. I'm not 100%-
- Joseph Esposito: [33:08](#) Happy with it yet, but we're moving in the right direction, so increased outreach.
- Allison Pennisi: [33:11](#) Barb?
- Barb Graff: [33:12](#) Getting the Seattle emergency management program accredited, and then serving on the commission to help 99 other programs get accredited as well.
- Omar Bourne: [33:19](#) Tom?
- Tom Sivak: [33:20](#) Last year, we had to open a resource center for people who were affected by the hurricanes. When we opened up that resource center, we did it from a locally-based concept, and it was something that we were able to utilize the plans that were set for multi-agency resource centers, or resource centers. We were able to take those plans and leverage them, so setting that up, especially at the local level, is definitely a big success.
- Omar Bourne: [33:43](#) Wonderful. We got two more, and then we're out of the rapid-fire Q&A. What's your favorite disaster-themed movie or TV show? Tom, let's go.
- Tom Sivak: [33:54](#) "Paw Patrol." The reason why I saw "Paw Patrol," and I'm getting some big yays in the room, is when you watch the show, you can see where you have Ryder, who's the emergency manager, and you have Chase, who's the police officer, and

Marshall, who's the firefighter, and Rubble, who's the public works person. When you watch "Paw Patrol," I always think of it in the world of that they're doing emergency management, and they're always doing something to serve every episode. After every episode, I also take my boys and we actually play "emergency manager." I have three boys, and when we start playing emergency manager, we always dump a box of cars, firetrucks, and police cars, and public works, and we always dump it on the floor and we start coordinating appropriately.

- Omar Bourne: [34:36](#) "Paw Patrol." I love it. Barb?
- Barb Graff: [34:39](#) "The Martian." If Matt Damon can survive on Mars, anybody should be able to survive here.
- Omar Bourne: [34:43](#) Great movie. Sir?
- Joseph Esposito: [34:45](#) "Sharknado," of course. I'm only kidding. I bet they didn't have a plan for that. Again, on the lighter side, "King Kong." The original "King Kong."
- Joseph Esposito: [34:58](#) Who had a plan for a giant gorilla attacking New York?
- Allison Pennisi: [35:04](#) All right. Last but not least, Barb, we'll start with you. Sum up the future of emergency management in one word.
- Barb Graff: [35:11](#) Growing.
- Allison Pennisi: [35:13](#) Tom?
- Tom Sivak: [35:14](#) Inspiring.
- Joseph Esposito: [35:15](#) Preparedness.
- Omar Bourne: [35:17](#) Wonderful. A lot of insightful information here. As I said earlier, if you're an emergency management enthusiast, this is the episode for you. If you're not, it still is because with the firepower in this room, there was a wealth of knowledge that we learned today.
- Allison Pennisi: [35:33](#) Absolutely. We encourage everyone to visit your local municipality online to check out more information about emergency management, what they do, how they help your community, and please get involved. Volunteer, apply for opportunities. We would love to have you. 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.