

Allison Pennisi: [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.

Allison Pennisi: [00:19](#) From the Emergency Management Department in the city that never sleeps, here are your hosts, Omar Bourne, and Allison Pennisi.

Omar Bourne: [00:27](#) Hello everyone. And thank you for listening. I'm Omar Bourne.

Allison Pennisi: [00:31](#) And I'm Allison Pennisi. Thank you for joining us for our first show. We want you to come back as often as you can, and feel free to add "Prep Talk" to your favorite RSS feed or on iTunes. You can also follow us on social media. Now, let's get into the show.

Omar Bourne: [00:45](#) That's right Allison, we have a packed show for you. Today, we're talking about PlanNowNYC. If you haven't heard about it, it's an interactive website designed to engage New Yorkers about possible emergency scenarios. Now check this out. The site walks you through how you can make a plan and how you can prepare for and respond to no-notice emergencies.

Allison Pennisi: [01:04](#) So our two distinguished guests have been public servants in the city for decades and have played key roles in creating this website. Our first guest is not only commissioner for New York City Emergency Management, but he also served in the NYPD for more than 40 years, and for more than 12 years was NYPD's top ranking uniformed officer. Please, everyone, welcome Commissioner Joseph Esposito.

Joseph Esposito: [01:26](#) Thank you folks. Thank you for having us on today. Appreciate it.

Omar Bourne: [01:29](#) And joining Commissioner Esposito is the Chief of Counter-terrorism and Emergency Preparedness for the New York City Fire Department. He was the first chief at the World Trade Center attacks on the morning of September 11 and is the founding director of the FDNY Center for Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness, Chief Joseph Pfeifer. Thank you for joining us today.

Joseph Pfeifer: [01:48](#) Thanks for having me. It's great to be here.

Omar Bourne: [01:50](#) Thank you very much. Now you've both worked for New York City for many years and have seen many emergency events,

including the September 11 attacks. How has this experience shaped what you do today?

Joseph Esposito: [02:01](#)

Chief Pfeifer, you want to kick it off? Go ahead.

Joseph Pfeifer: [02:03](#)

I think September 11 changed all of us. Matter of fact, we could call it a global trauma. It affects how we think about ourselves and how we think about the Fire Department, the Police Department, and emergency management. Not only do we have to deal with fires and emergencies, but now we all have to think about terrorist events. And how do we prepare for those events. How do we prepare our first responders? And just as important, how do we prepare the citizens of the New York City and the visitors.

Joseph Esposito: [02:39](#)

And you said, how is it really shaped what we do today?

Joseph Esposito: [02:42](#)

Well, before 9/11, I think a terrorist attack was probably one of the last things we thought about in the PD, Emergency Management, FD, no matter what the agency was, I think that was probably the last thing we thought about.

Joseph Esposito: [02:54](#)

Now, it's the first thing we think about. When we hear about an explosion, when we hear about fire, a building collapse. Whatever it is. A big vehicle accident. We think, is it an attack?

Omar Bourne: [03:06](#)

An attack.

Joseph Esposito: [03:07](#)

And that's what is in the forefront of our minds now. We're all thinking out of the box now. I think, as I said, terrorism is the first thing we're thinking about and what our mindset is, you have to be ready for the unexpected now.

Joseph Esposito: [03:22](#)

We always had a routine. Before 9/11 we had a routine. Police, Emergency Management, FD, Building Department, the DOC, whatever the agency was. Okay, we had a set of plans. How to react to things. That all went out the window on September 11.

Allison Pennisi: [03:38](#)

Now, I know we can all agree that September 11th was a devastating event. Some of us remember it vividly, I know I do. But some people may not, or may not have thought about how to prepare. What do you think that people should be doing to prepare for emergencies?

Joseph Esposito: [03:52](#)

Joe ... Chief.

Joseph Pfeifer: [03:54](#) People have to look at where they work, where they live, and how ... what do I need to do? So as we prepare for emergencies and we look at September the 11th, and we look at office buildings. So, when people are at work in the office buildings, do they know where to go, do they know where to get information. Do they know what to do.

Joseph Pfeifer: [04:19](#) So we're asking people to come to the website, and to look and gather information on what to do.

Joseph Esposito: [04:29](#) People have got to have a plan. I mean, you'll hear that theme throughout this whole podcast and what will we do here at Emergency Management and FD, PD. Everyone has to have a plan. Especially after 9/11.

Joseph Esposito: [04:42](#) Again, before 9/11, if a fire broke out, you went for the nearest exit, and you got out. If you heard about a shooting, maybe you went indoors. But now it's more. You've got to have a plan because if something does happen, and whether it's a terrorist attack or just a big event, you've got to have a plan for yourself and your family, and that's what I think is in the forefront of what we're doing here in the city now. Trying to get people as prepared as possible for the unexpected.

Omar Bourne: [05:07](#) And it's more about personal preparedness, and I think that's one of the messages that kind of was lost prior to 9/11, but now, in this society in which we live, today's day and age is more about personal preparedness.

Omar Bourne: [05:20](#) Now New York City has a lot of resources to help people prepare for emergencies, and you can visit our website, NYC.gov/emergencymanagement to learn more.

Omar Bourne: [05:29](#) Most recently, New York City Emergency Management launched PlanNowNYC in partnership with the Fire Department, PD, MTA and the Health Department. Now the website is really a one-stop shop for walking people through how they can be prepared and aware for no-notice emergencies, including terrorist attacks.

Omar Bourne: [05:48](#) What can people expect to learn from the PlanNowNYC website?

Joseph Esposito: [05:52](#) Well you know, I think with any event, people probably have a conception of what they want to do if something were to happen. But this really will walk you through what we feel are the best practices for when something were to happen.

Joseph Esposito: [06:05](#) For instance, terrorism. It's run, it's hide, and it's attack. Those are the three things that we come up with when there's a terrorist attack. Flee the scene is your first option. Secondly, hide, if you can't get out of there. And third, as a last resort would be to attack if you're put into that position.

Joseph Esposito: [06:23](#) So, these are things that I think we have to, as the City, it's our responsibility to make sure that the folks that are out there, make plans and make proper plans. And that's what you'll get on our website.

Joseph Pfeifer: [06:37](#) Commissioner, I'm very excited about your website, because it's short. And it tells me what I need. So for example, the website is not a ... pages of what to do, it's small checklist. So how do I control bleeding? How do I control bleeding if someone's shot? And, in just a couple bullet points, it tells us how to do that.

Joseph Pfeifer: [07:04](#) Another area, which I like a lot, is, should I stay or should I go? It's a question people ask. If this occurs, do I run out, or do I stay in the building? And in a couple bullet points, this website allow people to know what to do, and what not to do.

Joseph Esposito: [07:24](#) That's a great point Chief, and thank you for bringing that up.

Joseph Esposito: [07:27](#) What we find is, you can't address the public and give them a 20 page booklet on what to do and how to be ready. We try and get it down to it's shortest form, so that people will ... it will ... they'll retain their attention, they'll learn something, and short and sweet is really the message.

Omar Bourne: [07:46](#) If you point out short attention spans nowadays-

Allison Pennisi: [07:48](#) Yep.

Omar Bourne: [07:48](#) So that's what's so good, it's concise. And it's to the point.

Allison Pennisi: [07:54](#) One of the things I love about PlanNowNYC, is that it, not only offers tips for people who live in the city, but even for commuters. Because there's so many people ... I think often people forget, how many people live outside of the five boroughs. They might live in New Jersey, they might live in Long Island, they might even live in Connecticut, and they come in to the city to work.

Allison Pennisi: [08:13](#) What are some of the key tips for people who are traveling to New York City or work in New York City to keep in mind should an even occur here, and they're not able to get home?

Joseph Esposito: [08:21](#) Well that's a very good point. So many people, not just people working, but the tourists that come in here. And I'd like to try get into the tourists ... the hotel ... we're going to the hotels and trying to engage the hotels, so that they can advise their visitors on how to react in case something were to happen. So many people come into the city on a daily basis, and what happened after 9/11? Your biggest concern was, where's my family? How are they? Are they safe? Do I need to meet them? Where do I go to meet them?

Joseph Esposito: [08:54](#) And that's part of what we walk you through in Emergency Management, is to make a plan so that you can get the message out to your loved ones about how you are and where you are.

Joseph Pfeifer: [09:06](#) Commissioner, that's great. Making plans, learning how to do that, and for people who come into the city to be concerned about, how do I deal with my family that's expecting me home, and I can't get out of the city because the transportation is knocked down. Or ... the other thing the website does, is it gives us tips.

Joseph Pfeifer: [09:31](#) So if I'm stuck in the city, or if my cell phone doesn't work, because everybody's on their cell phone at the same time, [crosstalk 00:09:40] you know, during an emergency, what do I do? And the website says, text. You could text message. Not only is the chances of getting through, better, but if you're in the city for a long time, you're able to save the battery. And we all know our batteries die way too soon.

Omar Bourne: [09:57](#) Yes they do.

Joseph Pfeifer: [09:58](#) Yes.

Omar Bourne: [10:00](#) Stay tuned, we have a lot more ahead on today's show. Coming up, find out what Commissioner Esposito and Chief Pfeifer are doing to make sure that the city's as ready as possible for any incident that might happen.

Omar Bourne: [10:12](#) And still to come, what keeps these emergency managers up at night? We have the answers, but first, here's Bushra with our "Prep Talk" Tip of the Week.

Bushra: [10:22](#) Thank you Omar and Allison. Today, I'm going to give you some quick tips on how to keep your phone charged when disaster strikes.

Bushra: [10:29](#) Turn off your Wi-Fi or Bluetooth if you're not using them. Text. Do not call. Turn off your push notifications. Revoke background app access and last but not least, conserve your battery power. Do not use your phone unless it's for emergency information. Your games can wait.

Bushra: [10:47](#) For more information on how can be prepared, visit NYC.gov/plannow.

Bushra: [10:52](#) That's it for the Tip of the Week, I'm Bushra.

Omar Bourne: [10:56](#) Thank you Bushra. We're chatting with New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito, and Chief of Counterterrorism and Emergency Preparedness for the New York City Fire Department, Joseph Pfeifer.

Omar Bourne: [11:08](#) From an emergency management stand point and perspective, what are you doing as a leader, to ensure that the city is as ready as possible for any event that might happen?

Joseph Esposito: [11:19](#) I can sum it up in three words. Outreach, outreach, outreach. That's that. I think we can do more.

Omar Bourne: [11:27](#) Right.

Joseph Esposito: [11:27](#) We're getting our message out to the public. To the people that need us the most. The inner city folks, the people that are out there from day to day, working every day just making ends meet. We got to get a message out to them. Those are the folks that are probably going to be impacted the most.

Joseph Esposito: [11:44](#) And, we're trying to get out to every person in this city, to have a plan. And I keep mentioning plan, that's what it's about. But we're going out to schools, we have a Ready Girl program, where we have one of our staff is ... dresses as a superhero, Ready Girl. She goes out and interacts with kids and schools. We find the earlier we can get that message out, to be ready for an incident, the better off we'll be, and the more likely that the public will take it as they move up in life in age, they will continue to keep that in their mind, to be prepared. And that's the key, outreach and preparation.

Omar Bourne: [12:21](#) Chief Pfeifer?

Joseph Pfeifer: [12:25](#) You know, Commissioner, you're talking about starting it early. And I totally agree with that and I think that's really important. Over the years we've learned on the fire side, and every child at

school knows, stop, drop and roll. It's part of who they are. What we try to do on the Emergency Management in the Fire Department, is to have that same thing. What's my plan? What do I need to do, and what do I need to do now?

- Joseph Pfeifer: [12:56](#) So, one of the things that everyone knows is, if you see something, say something.
- Omar Bourne: [13:06](#) Say something. Yeah.
- Joseph Pfeifer: [13:06](#) What we're trying to do, and what we're saying now, is we're adding to that. See something, say something, and do something.
- Omar Bourne: [13:15](#) Right.
- Allison Pennisi: [13:15](#) Absolutely.
- Joseph Pfeifer: [13:16](#) So we're telling people you can do something if you're caught in a terrorist event, a natural disaster, or just an accident. And this website gives you some of the tools to do something. And those tools may be the difficult between life and death.
- Allison Pennisi: [13:39](#) So you know, we've been talking about terrorism, we've been taking about general emergencies. We know that these are not comfortable topics to discuss. But what do you hope that people will take away from your work to help prepare the city?
- Joseph Esposito: [13:52](#) Well, I would hope that they would have in their mind, 'Be ready for the unexpected'. Again, before 9/11, before the world has changed the way it has changed in the last 15 years or so, we may have thought about what do we do if we got into a fire, or a certain situation, but we didn't think about terrorism attacks. What happens if somebody drives a car down the sidewalk? What happens if somebody detonates an explosion near where you work?
- Joseph Esposito: [14:21](#) People have got to be ready for the unexpected, and that's the message that we put out there. You don't know what's coming down the pike, but you've got to be ready for it.
- Joseph Pfeifer: [14:33](#) And being ready is something we teach our responders.
- Joseph Esposito: [14:35](#) Yeah.
- Joseph Pfeifer: [14:36](#) We train them for different types of incidents, but now we're saying, we want to train the public.

Omar Bourne: [14:44](#) Okay.

Joseph Pfeifer: [14:45](#) And that is also a responsibility for the public to be ready as we would want our police and our fire fighters, and our emergency medical and paramedics.

Omar Bourne: [14:56](#) Yeah, yeah. It's almost as if preparedness now doesn't just stop with the first responders. Now, as an individual, I have to have some type of awareness of how I should be prepared on a daily basis. Because you just never know, as Commissioner Esposito said, you have to be prepared for the unexpected.

Omar Bourne: [15:16](#) Now the question I think everyone, all of our listeners, would like and answer to is, what keeps you up at night as an emergency manager?

Joseph Esposito: [15:28](#) Well there's a couple of things. First, the natural one, that everyone I'm sure is going to say is not being ready for the unexpected.

Omar Bourne: [15:36](#) Right.

Joseph Esposito: [15:37](#) Have we thought of every scenario. We have dozens and dozens of plans in this city. How to deal with all types of emergencies, but what have we not thought of. What have we not planned for. And that's what keeps me up at night. There's something that we, as an agency, as a city, didn't think about and didn't prepare for.

Joseph Esposito: [15:55](#) The other side of it is, what keeps me up at night, is that our public really is not as ready as I think as they should be. And that's why this is so important, to get the message out, to be ready for the unexpected. Have a plan for yourself, have a plan for your family, have a plan for your loved ones.

Omar Bourne: [16:11](#) Chief Pfeifer.

Joseph Pfeifer: [16:12](#) In my job, there's a lot of things I have to worry about. From terrorist attacks to hurricanes. But I think what were looking at now, is the vertical environment.

Omar Bourne: [16:28](#) Okay.

Joseph Pfeifer: [16:30](#) What's the risk now, are high rise buildings. Which is the economy of our country. And how do we prepare for that? So we just held a conference on vertical preparedness at the new One World Trade Center with the FDNY and NYPD, Emergency

Management, and we also poured in the building owners, and managers. And we told them, you're responsible too. And we also poured in hospitals and trauma centers.

- Joseph Pfeifer: [17:02](#) So what we're looking for, is if the unknown happens, that from the person in the building, to the first responders, and the building owners, all the way through to hospitals, we have a system, an entire system, a whole city, that can help each other and increase safety for our people.
- Omar Bourne: [17:32](#) And it's about everyone working together to make sure that we're all prepared, and that we're all safe.
- Omar Bourne: [17:40](#) Commission Esposito, Chief Pfeifer, I want to thank you both for being with us on the show today. It's been great. A wealth of knowledge, and for our listeners, PlanNowNYC, check out the website sometime. Thank you guys for listening.
- Allison Pennisi: [17:55](#) That's this week's podcast of "Prep Talk." Like what you heard? Listen anytime by subscribing and be sure to visit us online at NYC.gov/emergencymanagement.
- Allison Pennisi: [18:03](#) Until next time, stay safe, and prepared.