

Speaker 1: [00:01](#) 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: [00:26](#) Hello everyone. Thank you for listening. I'm Omar Bourne.

Allison Pennisi: [00:29](#) And I'm Allison Pennisi and you are our listeners and as always we thank you for joining us. We want you to come back as often as you can, so feel free to listen to Prep Talk on your favorite podcast provider. You can also follow us on social media, on our Twitter @nycemergencymgt, Facebook, Instagram, and much more.

Omar Bourne: [00:48](#) Allison, 2020 is just days away and there is no other place to ring in the new year like New York City.

Allison Pennisi: [00:57](#) That's right, Omar. Every year as the clock nears midnight on December 31st, the eyes of the world turn to the crossroads of the world, New York City. As we celebrate the new year, have you ever wondered who was responsible for this dazzling event in New York City?

Omar Bourne: [01:12](#) Oh, we have the answer for you, but you know we got to tease it before we dive in. It is time for the Situation Report, the latest news in the emergency management field.

Speaker 4: [01:27](#) Here's your "Prep Talk" Situation Report.

Allison Pennisi: [01:31](#) All right. It's the situation report. Let's get started. The City of New Orleans recently was hit with a cyber attack. Phishing attempts and suspicious activity were detected on the City's network. The New Orleans Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness said in a series of tweets that about six hours after technician investigators detected what they called a cybersecurity incident, the city's Information Technology Department began powering down servers and city computers as a precaution. New Orleans mayor, LaToya Cantrell, declared a state of emergency for the city and said that while Ransomware was detected, no ransom has been demanded in the cyber attack.

Omar Bourne: [02:09](#) Thank you, Allison. Another story for you, now the Federal Communications Commission, or FCC, announced that it has enhanced the wireless emergency alerts. Those are the loud

tones that you receive on your mobile phones before an emergency. Some of the improvements that have been made include geographic accuracy. Local officials can now send messages to a specific affected area without reaching unaffected communities. You can also now send longer messages. Officials can now send messages with 360 characters. That has increased from what used to be 90 characters, and messages are also now available in Spanish.

Omar Bourne: [02:56](#)

Now, the expansion also includes a class of alerts called public safety messages for officials to convey recommendations for saving lives or property, such as the location of emergency shelters after a disaster. For more information about wireless emergency alerts, or WEAs, as we like to call them, you can visit [fcc.gov](http://fcc.gov). These improvements are going to be important for emergency managers to warn and protect the public. We are happy that those are in place.

Allison Pennisi: [03:29](#)

Absolutely. Thanks Omar. If you're looking to make a New Year's resolution to be prepared in 2020, you're in luck. New York City Emergency Management has released its annual Resolve to Be Ready calendar. Now, it's filled with regular reminders, broken out into small, simple steps, and the calendar can help you work preparedness into your schedule throughout the year. You can check out all the tips by visiting [NYC.gov/emergencymanagement](http://NYC.gov/emergencymanagement). And that is the Situation Report. Still to come, we will be talking with Tom Harris from the Times Square Alliance, the organization in charge of the New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square, and we will also chat with Kevin Clark, from New York City Emergency Management about the interagency coordination associated with this event. But first, here's a public service announcement from New York City Emergency Management and the Ad Council.

Speaker 5: [04:17](#)

Your daughter doesn't want to talk about why her room is a horrible mess. Your son doesn't want to talk about why he's wearing mismatching socks. Your spouse doesn't want to talk about their bad haircut. Families don't have to talk about everything, but they should talk to plan for an emergency. Pack basic supplies in a Go Bag. Water, canned food, flashlights, batteries, medical supplies, IDs and some cash. Talk about where you'll meet in case you lose one another, and of course, don't forget to pack the dog treats. Talk to your family and make an emergency plan. Go to [NYC.gov/readyny](http://NYC.gov/readyny), or call 311 to make your family's emergency plan. Brought to you by New York City Emergency Management and the Ad Council.

Speaker 4: [05:18](#) You are listening to "Prep Talk," the emergency management podcast.

Omar Bourne: [05:23](#) You are listening to "Prep Talk" and we are back. Joining us for this episode are Tom Harris, senior vice president for the Times Square Alliance and Kevin Clark, operations manager at New York City Emergency Management. Gentlemen, thank you for joining us.

Kevin Clark: [05:41](#) Thanks for having us.

Tom Harris: [05:42](#) Thanks, Omar.

Allison Pennisi: [05:43](#) Let's get right into it. Tom, how did the Times Square Alliance gets started?

Tom Harris: [05:46](#) The Times Square Alliance was started in 1992. It was formed by a group of property owners and theater owners with the mission of making Times Square clean, safe and fun. And today we exist to improve and promote Times Square.

Omar Bourne: [06:01](#) Let's talk a little bit about the massive spectacular event that is New Year's Eve. What goes into those plans, and when does that planning begin?

Kevin Clark: [06:13](#) Well, we plan ahead of time for all of our events and I think for this current event, we started back in early December, with probably four meetings with other city agencies. We work very closely with the NYPD, who is the incident commander, and in this event, that's shared responsibilities with TSA, the Times Square Alliance. There's a partnership, there to begin with, that is also supported by multiple agencies. There's nearly 15 other agencies that are involved at the state and federal level and local level. We work with all of those agencies on a regular basis, and for an event, it means we ramp up what we normally do on a daily basis. We're bringing additional staff and resources into the event planning for that. We'll have staff at the NYP joint operations center for the day, and all of that is to bring coordination and fulfill our role as a coordinating element for the incident commander for events and for emergency response.

Tom Harris: [07:10](#) The Alliance has a great team of talented events, and we also have strong partnership with One Times Square and Countdown Entertainment. We work closely with the Mayor's Office of Citywide Events with the emergency management, Kevin and his team, the NYPD, the Department of Sanitation, the

Department of Transportation. We've already started to make changes for 2021. In short, we're working on two New Year's Eves at once. We always strive to make it a better experience for the people who come to Times Square and the billion people who watch it worldwide.

- Allison Pennisi: [07:45](#) We've talked about this behind the scenes coordination between the Times Square Alliance, with City agencies and different partners. The Times Square Alliance also works closely with the NYPD to ensure there is a robust security plan in place. Can you talk to our listeners about what those steps look like?
- Tom Harris: [08:03](#) Sure. Events like this are always a high security concern, and safety always comes first. It's important to understand that this is a live television event in front of a live audience on a work day in the middle of Times Square, where offices and businesses and Broadway is open. Planning and coordination are the only way that we could be successful. We have regular meetings with the New York City Police Department, with Emergency Management, and we look to communicate with our businesses and our stakeholders to make sure that they know what's going on, that they can have their own plans and they can communicate that to their visitors and to their patrons who come. The different businesses have communication plans and they get that word out to them. They have direct communication with us throughout the night, and we have direct communication with the incident command post of the NYPD.
- Omar Bourne: [08:58](#) And you mentioned that you're really planning for two events in one year. When we had Macy's on a couple of episodes ago, they said the same thing. They're planning the Thanksgiving Parade, not only for the year, but for the upcoming year. There's a lot that goes into the planning of these massive, spectacular, special events that people might not see. The Times Square New Year's Eve event isn't the only of event that you guys have. There are events that lead up to the day as well. The Wishing Wall is there, there is Good Riddance Day. Tell our listeners a little bit more about these pre-events that really lead up to the big celebration.
- Tom Harris: [09:46](#) Beginning just before Thanksgiving, our show globes go out into Times Square. They're basically snow globes with Broadway shows in it. They're going to exist throughout the New Year's Eve event. We have our confetti Wishing Wall that shows up in the beginning of December, we had the numerals that arrived and were tested in Times Square, and then they go to the top of One Times Square to be installed.

Tom Harris: [10:13](#) We have Good Riddance Day, which is on December 28th, and that's a time where people can share their bad memories from 2019, cleanse themselves for the new year, and we encourage people to smash things and to get all their frustrations of 2019 out and take those bad memories from the past. In Times Square, we shred and smash them.

Tom Harris: [10:39](#) Then we have a confetti test on the 29th, just to make sure that the confetti goes down and see how the wind is in Times Square and where, actually, the confetti ends up, followed by a ball test on the 30th at noon. And then game day is the 31st.

Omar Bourne: [10:54](#) Allison, Good Riddance Day, is that something that you're participating in? Get rid of all the bad memories for 2019?

Allison Pennisi: [11:01](#) I actually like the idea of just going somewhere and being able to smash things, just to vent out the frustration. You already have the unofficial holiday of Festivus, so I think that the fact that we have something official in New York City, where people can go and say farewell, and you know what? We're also entering a new decade. I still can't get over the fact that 2020 is a new decade. It's another exciting time to participate in Good Riddance Day. And where could people go to find out more information about the pre-events?

Tom Harris: [11:27](#) You could go to our website, [www.tsq.org](http://www.tsq.org), and there's a full list of events on the website.

Allison Pennisi: [11:33](#) That's great to know.

Omar Bourne: [11:34](#) I can't end this without saying Festivus for the rest of us. Shout out to "Seinfeld."

Allison Pennisi: [11:43](#) We've talked about pre-events, New Year's Eve preparations, and then the greatest show, the big show, New Year's Eve. Where are the best places for people to view the ball drop?

Tom Harris: [11:53](#) There are plenty of great places to view the ball drop in Times Square, and then north of Times Square on Seventh Avenue and Broadway. Visitor viewing starts at 43rd Street, and it goes up to 59th Street, and at Times, it's on 59th Street. We have jumbotrons if you happen to be on 59th street.

Allison Pennisi: [12:12](#) Do you recommend people get there early? We've talked about this for a lot of big planned events, that you should arrive early if you really want to have the best view. Do you have any

recommendations for people who are visiting who are going to be attending?

- Tom Harris: [12:24](#) It's always important to have a plan, look at the weather and to come dressed accordingly and to know how long you're going to be there. You're going to be screened by the New York City Police Department and you're going to go into a viewing area, and you're not going to be able to leave. Whenever you get there, you just have to be prepared to stay there until after midnight. Depending on the weather, that is when people come. I start my day at 4:00 a.m. And there are people out there waiting for the event at 4:00 a.m.
- Omar Bourne: [12:57](#) Wow.
- Allison Pennisi: [12:57](#) Those are committed people.
- Omar Bourne: [12:58](#) Yes, they are.
- Allison Pennisi: [12:58](#) People are committed to the New Year, which, I applaud you. I don't know if I would be able to do that, but I applaud you.
- Omar Bourne: [13:07](#) It's a once in a lifetime experience for a lot of people who come from near and far to see this, and it is a spectacular event. I'm glad, Tom, that you spoke about the weather. Last year was a rainy year.
- Tom Harris: [13:24](#) We noticed.
- Omar Bourne: [13:26](#) Yes we did. Kevin, what weather protocols are in place, and Tom kind of touched on advice, but to reiterate, what advice do you have for spectators to ensure their safety?
- Kevin Clark: [13:39](#) Well first of all, pay attention to your weather products. We work directly with the National Weather Service and we have a meteorologist on staff here, and that'll help us address the public recommendations for clothing and what's going to actually happen for the weather on New Year's Day, but dress appropriately. It's a public voluntary attended event. A lot of the things that we would normally do to advise people about cold weather alerts and that sort of thing, we understand that people come out in the winter and dress appropriately and enjoy a public event. Keep yourself well protected with weather gear. If it's raining, something to fend off the rain. If it's cold, obviously put on the layers. We'll be looking at the weather forecast coming up, and we'll be working with Times Square Alliance on all of that in terms of our messaging,

Allison Pennisi: [14:28](#) We've talked about arriving early, ensuring that you're dressed appropriately for the weather, now my question is access for those people with disabilities. Are there special entry points for those who may have mobility issues, others with disabilities access or functional needs?

Tom Harris: [14:46](#) Yes there are. There's an ADA viewing location on 44th street and Broadway, and anyone can access this by going to 44th street and Sixth Avenue, and they will be escorted down to the viewing location.

Allison Pennisi: [15:00](#) That's fantastic.

Tom Harris: [15:01](#) It is important to arrive early.

Allison Pennisi: [15:03](#) Great.

Omar Bourne: [15:04](#) Now Kevin, you talked about messaging, and I know last year New York City Emergency Management teamed up with the Times Square Alliance for a short code where people can sign up to get all the important alerts that they need for this event. Are we doing that again this year, and if so, what is the short code?

Kevin Clark: [15:26](#) Yeah, we're definitely doing that again. The short code for this year, if you're interested, is to text NEWYEARESEVE to 692692, and they'll register you for our special event messaging for this event. That will repeat next year. We'll keep that convention each year, but for this year, just register there. The kind of information we're going to have on that is coming out of our regular process, Notify NYC. All of the other approved qualified messaging that comes from NYPD, we're working currently with Times Square Alliance to develop some select messaging that we're going to put out to our respective applications and messaging services, so we have essentially joint messaging. That's really important to emphasize, how we do coordinate that in advance with NYPD and Times Square Alliance and the agency partners, because there's a lot of different moving pieces.

Allison Pennisi: [16:20](#) I love that you mentioned that, because we talk about coordination of the event, but even the coordination of messaging is paramount. Having the short code for our listeners, again, that's New Year's Eve to 692692, from Notify NYC. Messaging comes from the City of New York in addition to our partners at Time Square Alliance, so that's really great.

Omar Bourne: [16:39](#) Yeah, and 692692 is actually NYC-NYC.

Allison Pennisi: [16:42](#) There you go.

Omar Bourne: [16:44](#) Yeah. Tom, I got to turn to you. As we've been saying, this is a great event and there can't be a great event without great performers, so talk to us about the stars that are going to be there this year.

Allison Pennisi: [16:56](#) Besides the ball.

Tom Harris: [16:56](#) Yeah, you took my answer, Allison. The star of the show is the the ball, but we also have great musical acts. The X Ambassadors are going to perform two songs, including John Lennon's Imagine, which is always my highlight of the night. There's also going to be performances by BTS, Post Malone, Sam Hunt, Alanis Morissette, The USO Troupe, another favorite of mine, amongst others. It's going to be a great night.

Omar Bourne: [17:24](#) Post Malone. Allison, what's your favorite Post Malone song?

Allison Pennisi: [17:27](#) I think "Circles."

Omar Bourne: [17:28](#) "Circles?" Okay. I like "Better Now." I like "Better Now."

Allison Pennisi: [17:30](#) I think you've actually serenaded us on the podcast at least once. Maybe off air.

Omar Bourne: [17:37](#) I like to do a little bit of singing every now and then.

Allison Pennisi: [17:39](#) Our producer is laughing because he knows he probably-

Omar Bourne: [17:42](#) And then Alanis Morissette, "One Hand in my Pocket," right?

Allison Pennisi: [17:46](#) Yeah. Yep.

Omar Bourne: [17:47](#) Wow. That's a throwback.

Allison Pennisi: [17:49](#) Question, if you cannot make the festivities in Times Square, where can you tune in?

Tom Harris: [17:55](#) We want to make this event open to everyone. On our website, tsq.org, we host a six-hour commercial free webcast of the full event and you can watch on your mobile devices as well.

Allison Pennisi: [18:08](#) Fantastic.

Omar Bourne: [18:09](#) And any last words from both Tom and Kevin? And not just on New Year's Eve celebrations, because there are a number of

events throughout the year that Time Square Alliance organizes, right?

Tom Harris: [18:21](#)

Yes.

Omar Bourne: [18:22](#)

Any last words, one, on how people can get involved with the Times Square Alliance, and then just on the celebrations that are coming out with New Year's Eve?

Tom Harris: [18:30](#)

You can visit our website again, [tsq.org](http://tsq.org). We have certain signature events through the year. February is Love in Times Square. We have our annual Valentine's event. We will have... Design Pavilion will be in Times Square in May, followed by A Taste of Times Square on June 1st. June 21st is our summer solstice, and then we start the planning again for New Year's Eve, where we continue the planning.

Tom Harris: [18:54](#)

We also have Broadway buskers performing throughout Times Square from May through October. Times square is great. There's a lot going on and we welcome everyone to come out, not just on New Year's Eve.

Kevin Clark: [19:07](#)

Yeah, I would add that the New Year's Eve event is not just a one off for us in terms of how we work with Times Square Alliance. We work with them on a regular basis. I can't go on without just mentioning that it's not just the external agencies we work with. We work internally here with our planning partners in the Emergency Operations Center deployments. When we send somebody to the Joint Operations Center at NYPD, we send people there who are trained and know what to do and how to coordinate back for their responsive positions. That's something that happens along with a lot of our special events. We do over 25 a year, so it puts us in a position of coordinating with a lot of different precinct commands, borough commands, other city agencies, and we integrate that in with all of our staff here, in terms of what we do around the city all the time.

Omar Bourne: [19:58](#)

And is there a blueprint for this type of coordination? 25 special events are a lot of events throughout the year.

Kevin Clark: [20:04](#)

Blueprint? I would say most of it's in my head, but we do follow a standard procedure for event staffing documentation and we're working a planning process now. I know the commissioner's very interested in us working with City agencies in our event planning. We're continuing to expand that.

Omar Bourne: [20:25](#) And it's really the coordination and the relationships that you build with people throughout the year that really lends to this spectacular coordination that you have for these events, right?

Kevin Clark: [20:38](#) Yeah. I think it's interesting, because Tom comes from NYPD, and when you bring a partner in for events that has that familiarity and understanding of how the city works, it's value added on both sides. We appreciate that a lot. It doesn't just serve New Year's Eve. It helps us year-round.

Omar Bourne: [20:58](#) Wonderful.

Allison Pennisi: [20:59](#) Yep. All right, so strategic planning, strategic operations, strategic coordination. At the tail end of it, and the end product is, as Omar said, a spectacular event. Thank you both. Right now we're going to get into Rapid Response time, and if you are a first time listener, it's simple. Omar and I will ask questions and our guests will give the first answer that comes to mind.

Speaker 4: [21:21](#) If you don't know, now you know. You're listening to "Prep Talk," the emergency management podcast. It's time for "Prep Talk" Rapid Response.

Omar Bourne: [21:36](#) That's right. It's rapid response time. Let's get right into it. First question, Tom, we're going to start with you. What is one emergency item you cannot live without?

Tom Harris: [21:47](#) Hope and a positive mindset.

Omar Bourne: [21:49](#) We've never had that before.

Allison Pennisi: [21:50](#) I like that one.

Omar Bourne: [21:51](#) Yeah. Yeah. Kevin, how do you beat that?

Kevin Clark: [21:55](#) Well, I'm going to say if it's one thing, it's going to be my Jeep and everything in it.

Omar Bourne: [22:01](#) Sounds good.

Kevin Clark: [22:01](#) Yeah.

Allison Pennisi: [22:02](#) Okay. In the spirit of the new year, what is your favorite New Year's themed movie or TV episode, Tom?

Tom Harris: [22:09](#) "Assault on Precinct 13."

Allison Pennisi: [22:11](#) Wow. Kevin?

Kevin Clark: [22:13](#) I'm going to go with "When Harry Met Sally."

Allison Pennisi: [22:15](#) That's also a favorite of mine.

Omar Bourne: [22:17](#) Yeah?

Allison Pennisi: [22:17](#) Yes. Oh yes.

Omar Bourne: [22:18](#) What's your favorite scene?

Allison Pennisi: [22:20](#) Well probably the end, which is the New Year's Eve scene, which is my favorite one. It's also in my wedding proposal, so for all of our listeners, so you can know a little personal fact about me.

Omar Bourne: [22:30](#) Yeah, and some tips maybe, for those who might want to propose to someone?

Allison Pennisi: [22:34](#) Get creative, get creative. We'll see how many people propose on a New Year's Eve in Times Square this year.

Omar Bourne: [22:39](#) Oh yes. I'm glad you brought that up, because we got to ask that question. But before we get there, what is one New Year's resolution you have for 2020? Kevin, I'm going to start with you.

Kevin Clark: [22:51](#) I usually save my resolution making for New Year's Day, but that starts with a dip in the Atlantic ocean for the Polar Bear Dip. I go from there.

Allison Pennisi: [22:59](#) God bless you.

Omar Bourne: [23:00](#) Yeah, you know my stance on anything cold. Tom?

Tom Harris: [23:06](#) Be more present when I'm with my family.

Omar Bourne: [23:09](#) Wonderful. I like that.

Allison Pennisi: [23:10](#) I like that.

Omar Bourne: [23:11](#) And since you brought it up, proposals for New Year's Eve, what does that look like, Tom?

Tom Harris: [23:19](#) Throughout the years, we've had different proposals that have happened, and it usually happens in one of the viewing pens. We usually don't know that it's happening until after it's

happening and you hear the cheers. It's very special. I remember a couple of years ago, two members of the Department of Transportation got engaged on that evening, and it was really a memorable moment. A nice way to start the year, and I'm sure, a nice way to start their life together.

- Omar Bourne: [23:45](#) Sum up the work you do in one word.
- Tom Harris: [23:48](#) Fulfilling.
- Omar Bourne: [23:50](#) Kevin?
- Kevin Clark: [23:50](#) Collaborate.
- Allison Pennisi: [23:51](#) Fantastic. Well, thank you Tom and Kevin for joining us on this special episode of "Prep Talk" to discuss New Year's Eve and Times Square. For all of our listeners, we wish you a safe, prosperous, and joyous new year. We'll see you in 2020.
- Speaker 1: [24:11](#) That's this episode 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.