

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.

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

Bushra Mollick: [00:36](#) And I'm your special guest host, Bushra Mollick. Thank you for joining us.

Allison Pennisi: [00:40](#) This episode we're talking about how New York City Emergency Management works with the American Red Cross in Greater New York to help New Yorkers before, during, and after emergencies.

Bushra Mollick: [00:50](#) That's right. The American Red Cross in Greater New York is not only a longstanding partner of New York City Emergency Management, it has also supported the City in all types of emergencies, ranging from everyday fires to large-scale events like hurricanes.

Allison Pennisi: [01:03](#) Joining us to talk about this partnership is Michael de Vulpillieres, communications officer for the Red Cross' Greater New York chapter. Mike, welcome to "Prep Talk."

Michael D: [01:12](#) Hello. Thank you for having me.

Bushra Mollick: [01:14](#) Thank you for being here. Michael, the American Red Cross assists people who face disasters everyday, and in the Greater New York area alone, thousands of New Yorkers are effected by emergencies each year. Can you walk our listeners through how the Red Cross helps New Yorkers and how the organization works with New York City Emergency Management, and the city as a whole, during emergencies?

Michael D: [01:34](#) Of course. New York City Emergency Management has just been such an integral partner with the Red Cross. We really rely on this partnership to be able to help new Yorkers in their darkest time. As a humanitarian organization, our priority is to help the people that have been affected by all these disasters. Every single day in this city Red Cross volunteers, Red Cross employees are out in the community helping people who've lost

everything, who've just gone through one of the most difficult moments imaginable. They're helping people across the city, around these five boroughs. At the heart of our response to these disasters is our emergency communication center, which is out of our Manhattan headquarters. We have dispatchers there who are working 24/7, they're monitoring, they're in continuous communication with our City partners, Emergency Management, with the fire department.

Michael D: [02:24](#) They're monitoring the different emergencies that are going on across the five boroughs, and when there is an emergency like a fire, like a building collapse, like a building vacate, they are going to deploy. Those incidents are going to displace New Yorkers. Those individuals are going to dispatch a team to the scene of the disaster, to the scene of that emergency to assist the residents who've been affected. Red Cross initially it's a team of two to three individuals who will go on scene. We get there usually within 45 minutes of the emergency, also depending on traffic. We get on scene and the first thing we do is we're coordinating with Emergency Management, we're coordinating with FDNY, and we're finding the people who've been effected.

Michael D: [03:09](#) Where are those residents who've been displaced or what are their needs? If it's a single family home fire we're going to work with them. Our volunteers, our teams are going to work with them to find out what they need. Do they need a place to stay? Do they need some food? Is it cold out, do they need blankets? We're going to work with them to address their emergency needs. We're going to work with our city officials to see if there's other ways that we can help and to support that response.

Michael D: [03:38](#) In a smaller incident where there's a handful of families displaced who don't have a place to stay we're going to put them up, usually in a local hotel, for a few days. We're going to provide them with some emergency funds, a debit card with some money to get them through those next few days. We're going to invite them to meet with case workers who will see do they have any medical needs? Did they lose some prescription? Do they have a place to stay in the medium term? If they don't what we do is we work with our partners at HPD, a city agency, and other organizations to connect people to longer term housing.

Michael D: [04:15](#) That is a single family home fire. In larger incidents we scale up. If it's an entire building that's on fire or that's burned and we

have hundreds of residents displaced, we're going to work with New York City Emergency Management to stand up a reception center at a local school. We rely on that relationship in order to do that. The reception center will be a place where people can gather, where people can get information. Our volunteers will be there, CERT volunteers will be there, all sorts of City agencies will be there supporting those residents. Often also the City will dispatch an MTA bus to provide a safe place for the residents to wait. If it's in the summer a cool place, if it's in the winter a warm place. Often those large reception centers can transition to shelters if there's a large number of people that need housing overnight. We're in continuous contact and our volunteers are committed to helping New Yorkers in their most difficult time.

Allison Pennisi:

[05:14](#)

That's wonderful, and for our listeners New York City Emergency Management and the Red Cross also collaborate during what we call blue sky times, when there's not emergency, to help prepare New Yorkers for different disasters. Recently City agencies including New York City Emergency Management and the FDNY, along with the Red Cross and volunteers came together for Bronx preparedness weekend. It educated New Yorkers on how to be prepared for emergencies, and it also gave New Yorkers the opportunity to get free smoke alarms through Red Cross's Sound the Alarm program. With New York City being one of the most diverse cities in the nation, how important is it to help prepare all of our communities from the Red Cross perspective?

Michael D:

[05:54](#)

Sure, it's absolutely critical that we are empowering all New Yorkers with the resources information to be prepared and to be able to respond themselves to any disaster that could occur. You mentioned our Sound the Alarm program. This is a national Red Cross program in which we are educating residents on fire safety, on fire risks. We are then installing free smoke alarms in homes. You mentioned diverse communities. We're really targeting the communities that see the higher instance of fire, so really the most vulnerable. At the Red Cross our priority is addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, so we want to make sure that everybody had access to these free smoke detectors. Responding to so many fires every single day across these five boroughs we know all too well the impact that these can have on our communities, have on our families. We are working with partners like you guys, Emergency Management, with FDNY, the FDNY Foundation to register residents, to get them to sign up for free smoke alarms.

Michael D: [07:04](#) Bronx preparedness weekend was one awesome, wonderful example of that collaboration and we do that throughout the year. Our ability to reach diverse communities depends on our diverse workforce, which we have and we can always have more volunteers. Also our diverse partnerships, working with partners who really have a real foothold in these communities, maybe where English is not the main language, is really critical. Organizations like Tzu Chi (Chinese language), Mira Hispanic Spanish speaking partnership. Working with these partners is really the best way to get into these communities and to empower these residents with the tools that they need.

Bushra Mollick: [07:51](#) Awesome, thank you so much Michael. We want New Yorkers to be prepared for emergencies and be involved in supporting their communities before, during, and after a disaster. What are some initiatives that Red Cross's Greater New York chapter has been working on?

Michael D: [08:04](#) We have this really great program that is a little unique in terms of preparing our communities. It's called the Pillowcase Project. It is a program that brings preparedness education to children, to kids in elementary school. What we do is we bring a team of Red Cross volunteers or Red Cross employees into the schools and we provide these hour long presentations. It's not just presentations, it's also very interactive. What we're doing is we're empowering these kids with the tools. We're providing them with information on different risks, different disaster risks in their communities. We're providing them with coping tools to deal with stress and anxiety related to disaster. We're teaching them how to evacuate. There's very interactive games in which we're teaching kids how to identify if there's a fire in their home how to identify if the door's too hot, which direction to evacuate to.

Michael D: [09:04](#) The reason it's called the Pillowcase Project is every child is given a pillowcase. The program's sponsored by Disney so they're given a Disney pillowcase and they decorate it. What they're supposed to do then is take this decorated Disney pillowcase and fill it with the items that they're going to evacuate with. It's personal items, it's different types of items that will be good for them to use in the event of an evacuation. It's very engaging and what's great is, from what we've seen, is it's the kids that then take this preparedness information to their parents who will then get more motivated to take the necessary steps to get ready.

Allison Pennisi: [09:41](#) I think we've also seen that from New York City Emergency Management, through our Ready New York program, which educates New Yorkers on how to be prepared for different types of emergencies. We do a lot of youth program, we have our emergency preparedness superhero Ready Girl, and we've said this several times is that we notice that children tend to be the advocates for getting families prepared. They're the ones who come home with the information and say, "My teacher said we need to have an emergency plan, do we have one? Who are we supposed to call if there's an emergency? Where are we supposed to meet? What should we pack?" The Pillowcase Project is a really great way to demonstrate that kids can get involved in disaster preparedness by gathering supplies that they need, just like we emphasize people should have a Go Bag or an emergency supply kit in the event of a disaster if they have to evacuate or stay at home, or shelter in place as we like to say. That's really wonderful, that sounds great.

Allison Pennisi: [10:32](#) Now how can people get involved with the Red Cross and get more information?

Michael D: [10:36](#) Sure, so we want New Yorkers to, of course, get more preparedness information. We want more New Yorkers to volunteer with us, to learn more about what we do. They can visit RedCross.org. We also have an emergency app that they can download on the Google Play store or the iTunes store. That emergency app has information on first aid, preparedness, CPR, different disaster risks in their community, where you can find a shelter, how you can volunteer, how you can donate. There's a lot of resources on that app, on our website as well, and we want everybody really to learn more about what we do and to join us.

Bushra Mollick: [11:20](#) That sounds great. Thank you again Michael. Is there anything else you'd like to add that you feel like our listeners should know?

Michael D: [11:25](#) I'd add that the Red Cross on New York is on Twitter and on Facebook. You can follow us to see what we're doing @RedCrossNY is the handle for both of them. Also just want to thank New York Emergency Management for your partnership and all you do to work with us to support New Yorkers.

Allison Pennisi: [11:43](#) Fantastic. Talking with Michael de Vulpillieres from Red Cross Greater New York chapter. For our listeners, to learn more about the Red Cross and its initiatives, you can visit RedCross.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.