

Speaker 1: [00:04](#) 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 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, it is November, and we are quickly approaching the holiday season. Thanksgiving is around the corner, and it is not only time for friends, family, turkey and tofurky, but it's also time for floats, balloons and music.

Allison Pennisi: [01:05](#) That's right, Omar. On Thanksgiving, New York City is home to one of the nation's biggest holiday celebrations, the 2019 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, both for the young and the young at heart. We have two special guests here today to talk about the coordination for such an anticipated event.

Omar Bourne: [01:23](#) But before we dive in, you know what time it is. Let us get you updated on the latest news in the emergency management field.

Speaker 4: [01:32](#) Here's your "Prep Talk" Situation Report.

Allison Pennisi: [01:33](#) All right, this is the Situation Report. Let's get started.

Omar Bourne: [01:39](#) All right, Allison. Our first story is an interesting one. Some researchers from Denmark have come up with a new way to measure a hurricane's destruction, and it has nothing to do with money. They call it the area of total destruction. Now, looking at 247 hurricanes that hit the US since 1900, the researchers found that the top 10% of hurricanes, those with an area of total devastation of more than 467 square miles, are happening 3.3 times more frequently. Now, experts generally measure a hurricane's destruction by adding how much damage it did to people and cities; however, that could overlook storms that are powerful but impact sparsely-populated areas. Climate

scientists have predicted and shown that higher temperatures in the ocean and the atmosphere, a result of burning coal, oils and other fuels, are creating more extreme weather and storms.

Allison Pennisi: [02:41](#) Thanks Omar. Our next story, the mayor of Venice, Italy recently called for a state of emergency and the closing of all schools as the city has experienced exceptionally high tides, the highest that's been seen in 50 years. At six feet high, the flooding was the second highest in the city's history after disastrous flood of 1966, which peaked at more than six feet. Now, last year, 11 people died when sea levels rose above five feet during a period of severe weather. Italy has invested in a multi-billion dollar flood protection plan, but the offshore underwater dams have yet to be completed.

Omar Bourne: [03:14](#) Thank you, Alison. We have one more story for you. Sneezing, coughing, stuffy? 'Tis the season where everyone seems to get sick, and health officials say there's already been a number of cases of the flu spotted around the five boroughs here in New York City. Now, officials are urging people to get their flu shot, especially the elderly, children, pregnant women, and those with compromised immune systems. Doctors also recommend taking steps to prevent the spread of illness, using hand sanitizer frequently and staying at home from work when you're sick.

Allison Pennisi: [03:50](#) Thanks Omar. That is the Situation Report. Still to come, we will be talking with Chris Bannon, senior director of operations for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, and Frank McCarton, deputy commissioner of operations here at New York City Emergency Management. But first, here's a public service announcement from New York City Emergency Management and the Ad Council.

Speaker 5: [04:10](#) 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. Of course, don't forget to pack the dog treats.

- Speaker 5: [04:50](#) Talk to your family, and make an emergency plan. Go to NYC.gov/readyny or call 311 to make your family's emergency plan.
- Speaker 5: [05:02](#) Brought to you by New York City Emergency Management and the Ad Council.
- Speaker 4: [05:10](#) You're listening to "Prep Talk," the emergency management podcast.
- Omar Bourne: [05:16](#) That's right. You are listening to "Prep Talk," and we are back. Joining us for this episode are Chris Bannon, senior director of operations for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, and Frank McCarton, deputy commissioner of operations at New York City Emergency Management.
- Omar Bourne: [05:33](#) Gentlemen, thank you for joining us.
- Frank McCarton: [05:36](#) Thanks for having us.
- Chris Bannon: [05:36](#) Thanks for having us.
- Omar Bourne: [05:37](#) Guys, let's get right into it. 3.5 million spectators, more than 50 million viewers, and more than 8,000 participants. Chris, let's start with you. What goes into planning such a spectacular event, and when do those plans begin?
- Chris Bannon: [05:53](#) Well, believe it or not, we actually work on the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade two years out, so simultaneously we're working on year one and year two as we plan ahead, for multiple creative reasons. Paired with that, it becomes a pretty decent-sized team. The Branded Attainment team consists of a group of creatives, marketing, operation and our parade studio folks out in New Jersey that develop, design and fabricate all of our parade elements, pits for the Fourth of July fireworks, our flower shows and holiday exhibits all around the country.
- Omar Bourne: [06:27](#) Wow. Two years in advance.
- Allison Pennisi: [06:28](#) That's incredible.
- Chris Bannon: [06:29](#) Yeah.
- Allison Pennisi: [06:29](#) So, Frank, the City has an excellent relationship with Macy's in working to coordinate the parade. As deputy commissioner of

operations, can you explain to our listeners, what does that coordination look like?

Frank McCarton: [06:41](#) We work very closely with Macy's and all the different City agencies to lead that coordination amongst them all so that we're all talking. We work with the task force that would have looked at the balloons and the safety of the balloons. This year, as I understand, there are 13 new balloons that we've worked with Macy's on, and they've all been certified. We've gone to their balloon inflation, we went to their practice. There's a tremendous amount of safety involved, and we work with the NYPD on that. The way the balloons are flown for that day are all based on wind. That goes into our weather monitoring. We work very closely with the National Weather Service. We have a meteorologist onsite in our command truck for that morning. That gives the Incident Commander of the NYPD the weather forecast with the wind speeds.

Omar Bourne: [07:33](#) You mentioned the NYPD, and I know we work closely with them to ensure a robust security plan is in place for the parade. There's usually a press conference to discuss those security measures. Talk about the steps that make security a top priority for such a massive event.

Chris Bannon: [07:52](#) Yeah, security and safety is always a top priority for us at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. The plans are constantly monitored, tweaked, redefined, leading up to and even during game day. It's something that we're in lockstep with all City agencies on, and it's something that we take very seriously. From the very visible presence that you see, I tell everybody, "You can't walk down the parade route without bumping into a cop every six-to-eight feet," but that's all the stuff that's front of house. There's a lot of things happening behind the scenes, as well, that a lot of people aren't privy to, but I know that every city agency makes it top priority to ensure that, hopefully, the parade route is the safest place to be on parade day.

Frank McCarton: [08:33](#) If I could add, also, Omar, we put all the agencies together into agency command posts located on the parade route or just off the parade route. That includes all the key agencies that are communicating for that day. We also then work to put somebody from our agency and some of the other agencies up in the Joint Operations Center for the NYPD. Then, Macy's has a coordination center for the parade production stuff, and we put somebody in that. So there's that communication, coordination, leading that across all bounds, and we're monitoring everything

that goes on that day on the parade route, working with Macy's, the partners and also the NYPD.

Allison Pennisi: [09:12](#) Okay. So, we've talked about planning and coordination, but I imagine there's a lot of behind-the-scenes work happening in the parade studio, as, Chris, you mentioned before, with dozens of artists, painters and animators. Tell us a little bit more about that.

Chris Bannon: [09:25](#) Oh, absolutely. The parade studio folks are hard at work putting the finishing touches on all our parade elements for this year. So at this point in the game, it's pretty much a 24/7 operation for everybody across the board on the Macy's Branded Entertainment team side. They've worked for months to design and develop probably some of the coolest floats I've seen since, and I think everyone's in for a real treat. So at this point, everyone's just getting all the elements into position and getting them all set for convoy, which is when we transport all of our parade elements from New Jersey, out in Moonachie, through the Lincoln Tunnel, and up to starting line on the overnight. So, that's where we're at.

Omar Bourne: [10:03](#) Chris, I'm excited about the parade. Tell me and Allison, and or our listeners, a little about what floats they could expect to see. I remember last year, we were at the parade and we took some photos with... I know Ronald McDonald was there. It's just an amazing and spectacular event, so what can people look forward to this year?

Chris Bannon: [10:24](#) Some bigger and better floats that you've probably have ever seen. One that stands out and comes to mind immediately is our new Coach float. It's really something to be seen. That, Cracker Barrel, and of course, our new LEGO float where you can be on the lookout from my 11-year-old boy out there.

Allison Pennisi: [10:39](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Omar Bourne: [10:40](#) Whoa. You got a Cracker Barrel float?

Chris Bannon: [10:42](#) Cracker Barrel float.

Omar Bourne: [10:43](#) My goodness. Because I love Cracker Barrel, [inaudible 00:10:47]. Right. Okay.

Frank McCarton: [10:50](#) But I could tell you what my favorite is. My favorite is the Santa Claus. Anytime you see Santa Claus coming down and making

that right-hand turn on 31st Street, it just gives you chills. I can remember watching the parade as a little kid and my mom having a little tear in her eye when she saw Santa. So that's the best, right? Then you know the season's started.

- Omar Bourne: [11:09](#) Oh yeah. Yeah, that's right. We've been right there. So yeah, it gives you chills. It gives you chills.
- Frank McCarton: [11:18](#) It gives you chills.
- Omar Bourne: [11:20](#) Chris, where are some of the best places in New York City to see the parade, and what time should viewers get there?
- Chris Bannon: [11:27](#) Well, that's a weighted question. It all depends on how early you want to get out there. The parade does step off at 9:00 AM at 77th Street and Central Park West. As you said before, 3.5 million spectators along the route, so you can anticipate folks kind of queuing up a little bit earlier up on the Central Park West and Central Park South areas. As we make our way down Sixth Avenue, obviously there's more room on both sides of the streets, so that tends to fill up a little bit later, more towards the 6:00 to 7:00 AM hour. We really don't recommend viewing and below 37th Street because that's where the floats are deemed into the quiet zone and getting ready for actual television performances.
- Omar Bourne: [12:04](#) Gotcha.
- Allison Pennisi: [12:06](#) Are there special access points for people with disabilities who may want to go see the parade?
- Chris Bannon: [12:11](#) Yes, of course. We have a ADA viewing location, which is located on 59th Street and Sixth Avenue. We partner with a group called YAI Audiences, and they're in coordination with NYPD to coordinate access to that area.
- Allison Pennisi: [12:27](#) Fantastic.
- Omar Bourne: [12:28](#) If I wanted to get a sneak peek of your balloon inflation, where do I go?
- Chris Bannon: [12:32](#) Well, that's one of my favorites, the balloon inflation, to be honest. It's an event that's grown over the course of the years, and it's something that I know everyone gets excited about. On Wednesday, November 27th, it's open to the public. Another

free event here in New York. Doors open at 1:00 PM. We try to direct people down to the entry point, which is 73rd Street and Columbus Avenue. From there, you'll be shuttled into the queue, and then you'll be able to get a good glimpse at all the balloons on 77th Street and 81st Street.

- Omar Bourne: [13:00](#) Last year, New York City Emergency Management and Macy's teamed up to introduce a short code to make it easier for spectators to get information about the festivities. Is there a short code this year, what type of information can people expect, and how can they sign up?
- Chris Bannon: [13:15](#) Yes, there is, actually. The short code for this year is the word THANKSGIVING, and it can be texted to 692692.
- Frank McCarton: [13:23](#) The information they'll be getting is weather conditions, the timing of the parade, when it steps off, when it's over. Any type of pertinent information, we'll work with Macy's to get out that script ahead of time. Then, God forbid, if something happens, we'll have a way in which we'll be able to communicate, a secondary way to communicate with people. We have our Notify NYC, and that's just another way in which we can be able to send information to the public.
- Omar Bourne: [13:49](#) As we like to say, if you don't know...
- Allison & Omar: [13:51](#) Now you know.
- Omar Bourne: [13:53](#) That's right.
- Allison Pennisi: [13:53](#) There you go. So, ways of staying informed. Now I need to be informed. Chris, you need to help me out here. What big performers and stars can we expect for the 2019 parade?
- Chris Bannon: [14:03](#) Well, there's no shortage of stars this year. We have The Black Eyed Peas, the band Chicago, country singer Chris Janson, Lea Michele. The cast of Sesame Street will be there with us. K-pop band NCT 127.
- Omar Bourne: [14:17](#) Now, K-pop is big.
- Chris Bannon: [14:18](#) Huge. It's huge.
- Omar Bourne: [14:23](#) I don't know who this band is, but I can rest assured that there will be tons of fans out there for this K-pop band.

Allison Pennisi: [14:27](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Omar Bourne: [14:27](#) Yeah.

Chris Bannon: [14:27](#) Billy Porter will be out there as well with us. Kelly Rowland, and TLC too.

Omar Bourne: [14:33](#) Oh.

Chris Bannon: [14:33](#) I know my niece will be looking for The Muppets. Elmo.

Omar Bourne: [14:38](#) Okay. Yeah.

Allison Pennisi: [14:38](#) I'll look for The Muppets. It's one of my favorite things. Actually, I also like seeing The Rockettes, to be perfectly honest. That's always my favorite thing to see. Besides Santa Claus, as Frank mentioned earlier.

Omar Bourne: [14:48](#) They are wonderful. TLC, No Scrubs. [crosstalk 00:14:50] that.

Chris Bannon: [14:50](#) No Scrubs.

Allison Pennisi: [14:50](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative). No, no scrubs allowed at the parade.

Omar Bourne: [14:56](#) We were talking to Orlando, who works press for Macy's, before we came on air, and he mentioned a huge name, Alison, one that I am excited about along with TLC. Celine Dion. Oh. Yeah.

Chris Bannon: [15:12](#) I can confirm that is true. Celine Dion will be in our parade this year.

Omar Bourne: [15:15](#) Oh my goodness.

Allison Pennisi: [15:17](#) You heard it on "Prep Talk."

Omar Bourne: [15:18](#) You heard it here first.

Frank McCarton: [15:19](#) I know where I'll be sitting with you, watching for that float to go by, huh?

Omar Bourne: [15:22](#) Of course, of course. You know what? I might hop on and start singing with her.

Allison Pennisi: [15:27](#) I wouldn't put it past you.

- Omar Bourne: [15:28](#) If Orlando will allow me to, I definitely will be there.
- Allison Pennisi: [15:32](#) He's shaking his head no.
- Omar Bourne: [15:33](#) He said no!
- Allison Pennisi: [15:35](#) So if there are any bands or performance groups that are interested in participating in next year's parade, how do they go about doing that? Is there a special way to apply?
- Chris Bannon: [15:44](#) Actually, yeah. There's a pretty comprehensive website, [macys.com/parade](http://macys.com/parade). As I mentioned before, we're usually booking about two years out, so I'd be mindful of any applicants that they're probably be applying for the 2021 parade at this juncture.
- Allison Pennisi: [16:00](#) Any last words for our listeners about this year's parade? Frank, we'll start with you.
- Frank McCarton: [16:04](#) I think just come prepared. There are crowds. Take your time, get there early if you can. Dress for the weather. Keep an eye on what the weather is going to be. And just come and enjoy it, because it's the most wonderful experience you can have in New York City. I tell people all the time, it's one of the ones in which I look forward to, and to work, besides New Year's Eve. The Macy's Fireworks, of course, is another one.
- Chris Bannon: [16:28](#) Good save, Frank.
- Frank McCarton: [16:29](#) But I have to tell you, it's enjoyable, and to be able to walk the route and to see the children's eyes pop at these things is tremendous. I spent a little time out of the city in part of my career, and one of the things that I missed is to see that parade and be part of that parade, and to work with such great people and coordinate that. That's really what it's all about. We have, like you said earlier, Omar, just a great relationship, and a great working relationship, with the Macy's corporation over the years. So I look for putting on another great parade with these guys.
- Omar Bourne: [17:04](#) Yeah, definitely.
- Chris Bannon: [17:04](#) Yeah, and right back at you, Frank. Our partnership with all the City agencies, really takes a village to pull off what it is that we do. So our sincerest thanks to all the agencies that participate,

because I know that everyone really does get excited about it. We do welcome you all to come out and join us on Thanksgiving morning to check out the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

- Frank McCarton: [17:25](#) You guys have a tremendous team behind... that works on this. My entire team that we work together with the Macy's corporation to make sure that we put our best foot forward when working with them. There's many hours of long walkthroughs, there's many hours of meetings. There's a whole team behind me and my staff working for the commissioner to make sure we pull it off with great coordination.
- Omar Bourne: [17:44](#) And it all comes together well. For those of our listeners who may not be able to make it to New York City to view the parade in person, where can they tune in?
- Chris Bannon: [17:55](#) They can tune into NBC at 9:00 AM on Thanksgiving morning.
- Speaker 4: [17:59](#) If you don't know, now you know. You're listening to "Prep Talk," the emergency management podcast.
- Allison Pennisi: [18:08](#) All right, and it's Rapid Response time. If you are a first-time listener, it's very simple. Omar and I will ask questions and our guests will give the first answer that comes to mind.
- Speaker 4: [18:18](#) It's time for "Prep Talk" Rapid Response.
- Omar Bourne: [18:23](#) All right, Chris, let's start with you. What is one winter emergency item you cannot live without?
- Chris Bannon: [18:28](#) My shovel.
- Omar Bourne: [18:30](#) Frank, how about you?
- Chris Bannon: [18:30](#) My flashlight, in case the power goes out.
- Allison Pennisi: [18:34](#) Good.
- Omar Bourne: [18:34](#) Good answer.
- Allison Pennisi: [18:35](#) Okay. What is your favorite Thanksgiving day movie or TV episode? Chris, we'll start with you.
- Chris Bannon: [18:40](#) That's easy. "Miracle on 34th Street."

Frank McCarton: [18:43](#) "Christmas Vacation."

Omar Bourne: [18:45](#) Let's get one more in here. What is your favorite Thanksgiving day dish?

Chris Bannon: [18:51](#) I'll go with stuffing.

Omar Bourne: [18:53](#) Can't go wrong with stuffing.

Chris Bannon: [18:53](#) Can't go wrong with that.

Omar Bourne: [18:54](#) You're right.

Chris Bannon: [18:54](#) That's right.

Frank McCarton: [18:55](#) Patty McCarton's sausage stuffing. My mom's stuffing is phenomenal.

Allison Pennisi: [19:00](#) All right, and final question. Sum up the work you do in one word. Chris?

Chris Bannon: [19:04](#) Detailed.

Frank McCarton: [19:05](#) Rewarding.

Omar Bourne: [19:07](#) Both great answers. We want to thank you both for being here. Chris, thank you very much for the work you do with this parade. Frank, with the coordination, as well. Looking forward to a spectacular 2019 Thanksgiving Day Parade. I'm looking forward to Celine Dion. Allison, what about you?

Allison Pennisi: [19:25](#) I'm just looking forward to the magic that is the Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Chris Bannon: [19:29](#) Thanks so much for having us.

Frank McCarton: [19:30](#) Thanks for having us. Thanks Omar.

Chris Bannon: [19:32](#) Thanks Allison.

Allison Pennisi: [19:33](#) As a reminder to our listeners, you can text the word THANKSGIVING to 692692, that's THANKSGIVING to 692692, for updates on this year's parade, and we hope to see you there. From all of us here at "Prep Talk," we wish you and your families a very happy Thanksgiving.

This transcript was exported on Nov 21, 2019 - view latest version [here](#).

Speaker 1: [19:54](#) 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.