

Prep Talk - Episode 73 Business Preparedness

Speaker 1 ([00:02](#)):

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.

Allison Pennisi ([00:23](#)):

Hello everyone. Thank you for listening. 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, LinkedIn, and much more. In this episode, we will be discussing how organizations can be ready for emergencies and what the government is doing to support these efforts. Here to discuss is Erika Amaya, New York City Emergency Management's strategic partnership specialist. Erika, welcome to Prep Talk.

Erika Amaya ([01:00](#)):

Thanks so much for having me.

Allison Pennisi ([01:02](#)):

We appreciate you being here. To get started, tell our listeners about your role at New York City Emergency Management.

Erika Amaya ([01:09](#)):

So New York city is home to over 200,000 businesses who employ nearly 4 million people. In our unit, strategic partnerships works to engage with the private sector through three different ways. And the first is by sharing information, building partnerships, and facilitating trainings on preparedness principles, and we also strive to help businesses prepare for emergencies. When those emergencies happen, we work with other agencies to help those businesses recover so they can open their doors as quickly as possible. Second, we rely on these partnerships to support New York city's own emergency planning, from preparedness to response and recovery. Our partners share their concerns, their interests, and resources with us to inform current and future plans. And third, we promote a culture of employee preparedness that extends beyond the workplace. Staff can only be in one place in one time. And if you're not prepared at home, who is going to operate organization? We like to say that a prepared employee is a present employee, which is the first step to business resilience.

Allison Pennisi ([02:10](#)):

Thank you for that. A prepared employee is a present employee. Now, when is the best time for businesses to think about emergency preparedness and how often should a business update its emergency plan?

Erika Amaya ([02:22](#)):

So yesterday or today, if not already, right? The best time to prepare is before an emergency happens and it's best to dedicate time and resources when creating a plan from scratch. As you can imagine, the more time spent on the business continuity plan, the better it's going to be. And also, the more complex the organization, the more complex the plan will be. When it comes to updates, it's best to conduct a

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comprehensive review of the plan every other year. And businesses should also consider how drills, exercises, and after action items will be included in plan revisions.

Allison Pennisi ([02:58](#)):

So I know we discussed that there is time that is needed to make an emergency plan, but it doesn't take a lot of time or money to be prepared for a disaster. And I think it's safe to say the same holds true for an organization regardless of its size. So can you share what resources are available for businesses and organizations, especially those in New York City?

Erika Amaya ([03:19](#)):

Yes, absolutely. There are so many free resources to help businesses get started that I find it's really easy to get overwhelmed. And so I'm going to recommend three sources. The first is from our own agency, New York City Emergency Management. Our strategic partnerships unit creates the business guides and templates for what an emergency plan should entail. We also administer a program to encourage preparedness beyond plans, which we'll talk about in a minute. And the second resource is from the New York City Small Business Services Agency. SBS provides regular trainings for new and experienced business owners in creating and improving their emergency plans. They of course, also have a hotline that you can call during emergencies.

Erika Amaya ([04:06](#)):

And then the third resource is from ready.gov and there's a step by step guide that reviews how to conduct a business impact analysis, how to develop recovery strategies, developing the plan itself, and creating a testing and exercise schedule to strengthen the plan over time like we talked about before. And once the plan is written, businesses can always dive deeper. In every industry, continuity and preparedness groups meet to share trends and lessons learned. Collaboration with the city is great, but we also encourage businesses to talk to each other, to make the private sector network stronger in New York city.

Allison Pennisi ([04:42](#)):

So the ready New York for business guide and toolkit that's created by New York city Emergency Management, the New York City Department of Small Business Services, ready.gov. There are a plethora of resources available for businesses and organizations in New York city and nationwide, so thank you for sharing those. There is clearly a robust number of resources available to New York city based businesses and organizations. One of them is Partners in Preparedness, which is a program that your team runs and the program recently launched a public service announcement. Tell us more about the program and about the PSA.

Erika Amaya ([05:19](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. So Amanda Krawczyk, the Deputy Director of Strategic Partnerships worked with a few of our partners to showcase the power of our program in that PSA. And I know it was really hard to choose who was going to be featured, because we have nearly 900 organizations that participate in Partners in Preparedness. The PSA shows how mutually beneficial these partnerships are. The program itself provides targeted resources to businesses and in return, businesses have greater confidence in their own continuity planning. And I think that's just the starting point. From there, for example, because of the strength of our relationship, [inaudible 00:05:59] at the MET actually invited our agency to observe an active threat drill in 2019 during some after hours at the museum. Going in person to

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meet the folks involved not only showed the city's commitment to emergency preparedness, but really just helped to strengthen that relationship beyond just phone call calls and emails. For the past few years, we've also been providing handouts and guides to Allen at Shearman & Sterling Law offices, as well as Jake at Memorial Sloan Kettering for their annual national preparedness month events.

Erika Amaya ([06:30](#)):

And since they share those materials with all employees each year, they've cultivated a culture of preparedness over time. And because of that, they have an increased confidence that workers will be able to show up or log into work after a disaster has occurred. Another example, is Anne Marie at New York University. She was actually a panelist on a webinar that we hosted last month, where she shared key learnings from responding to COVID-19 on behalf of the consortium of private universities with all of our partners. So by sharing information, not only do we, the city, benefit but of course, those businesses also benefit from sharing knowledge with each other to strengthen resilience.

Erika Amaya ([07:12](#)):

And those are just a few examples of how our partners come from all industries and enjoy a range of benefits. Besides the preparedness activity centered on staying connected, keeping plans current, and testing plans, we also have a tabletop exercise toolkit with several scenarios ready for your organization to plug and play. And some of the scenarios include a fire incident, a supply chain disruption, and several extreme weather events. We develop a few scenarios a year to keep things fresh, we're currently working on a cyber attack and a couple of other fun scenarios for you to launch next year. We also host webinars on a variety of topics which are recorded and are then accessible from the partner portal for as long as you're a member.

Allison Pennisi ([07:57](#)):

Wonderful. And for our listeners, if you visit nyc.gov/partnersinpreparedness, you can learn more. And just to bring it all home here, what are some of the ways that the city is making sure businesses and organizations are prepared for emergencies? I know you've touched upon this already, but if you can give us additional details on that, as well as how have things changed the COVID-19 pandemic?

Erika Amaya ([08:21](#)):

Oh my gosh. Two awesome, awesome topics to tackle. Besides the resources I mentioned earlier to help in the planning process, the city does an amazing job of keeping the public informed, whether it's weather alerts, planned events and unplanned emergencies. And we have a notification program called CorpNet, which compliments Notify NYC, which is the city's official emergency communications program. So CorpNet is a free email notification service that provides business partners with current, accurate information about planned events and of course, those unplanned emergencies to enhance awareness and aid decision making.

Erika Amaya ([08:59](#)):

That information is generated by our own agency's watch command, which operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And we encourage people responsible for business continuity, health and safety, and security at their organizations to register for CorpNet. And in regards to how things have changed during and once the pandemic is over, I think that... I have to admit I joined the agency in fall of 2019 and worked in the office until we all went home to work from there. And in the months since then, the ways that we collaborate with other city agencies, state partners, and federal partners has really, I think,

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changed for the better. A concrete example that I can share, is the new business emergency engagement protocol. With help from the Small Business Services Agency and the New York City Economic Development Corporation, we created a set of operational strategies that can scale to any size and type of emergency while also setting recovery efforts up for success.

Allison Pennisi ([10:02](#)):

Fantastic. Speaking with Erika Amaya of New York City Emergency Management. It is rapid response time. And if you are a first time listener, it is simple. Prep Talk will ask questions and our guests will give the first answer that comes to mind. But before rapid response, here is a message from New York City Emergency Management.

Speaker 4 ([10:27](#)):

Leaks, structural collapses, bomb threats, those are emergencies that we consider.

Speaker 5 ([10:34](#)):

What keeps me up at night could be a fire down the street, an earthquake around the globe. And with the pandemic, it could be anything.

Speaker 6 ([10:43](#)):

Patient safety is always in the forefront of everyone's mind. How do you keep a hospital running when parts of it are working?

Speaker 7 ([10:51](#)):

We have close to 60,000 students and we need to be poised to respond to any potential emergency.

Speaker 8 ([11:02](#)):

Partners in Preparedness helps organizations prepare their employees, services, and facilities for emergencies.

Speaker 7 ([11:09](#)):

New York City Emergency Management provides prudent steps to take to be prepared for any kind of emergency.

Speaker 9 ([11:17](#)):

Partners in Preparedness allows me to make sure that we're as prepared as we possibly can be.

Speaker 6 ([11:23](#)):

It provides a bridge between us as a private sector, healthcare organization, and a municipal city agency.

Speaker 4 ([11:32](#)):

And you can share that with your friends and family as well. Learn about it, assist with your community.

Speaker 7 ([11:37](#)):

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We very grateful to have the assistance of New York City Emergency Management. It's been tremendously helpful.

Speaker 6 ([11:44](#)):

The pamphlets, the maps, the stuff that we get from Partners in Preparedness has really been beneficial.

Speaker 8 ([11:51](#)):

Our partners come from all industries. So whether you operate a small business or a large corporation, join Partners in Preparedness today.

Speaker 6 ([11:58](#)):

Any business in New York city would benefit from the information.

Speaker 7 ([12:02](#)):

It provides tremendous resources of valuable peer network and support when you need it most.

Speaker 8 ([12:10](#)):

Joining is easy. Visit nyc.gov/partnersinpreparedness or call 3-1-1.

Speaker 10 ([12:20](#)):

It's time for Prep Talk rapid response.

Allison Pennisi ([12:25](#)):

Okay. It's rapid response time. First question, Erika, what is your top emergency preparedness tip?

Erika Amaya ([12:32](#)):

My top emergency tip is to make sure that your pets are also prepared. My dog, Charlie girl has a go bag just like I do and I think I actually had more fun packing hers than I did my own. She's got treats, toys, food, and a soft blanket in case she needs to stay in her carrier while we evacuate.

Allison Pennisi ([12:52](#)):

Perfect. How do you maintain work/life balance?

Erika Amaya ([12:55](#)):

When things get busy, like with back to back activations here at the agency, breathwork and grounding exercises really help me to stay focused when things get stressful. And when I can, I love to go camping in the Adirondacks. This year, I visited five different parks and I can't wait to check out more next year.

Allison Pennisi ([13:13](#)):

Wonderful. And last but not least, some of the work you do in one word.

Erika Amaya ([13:18](#)):

Essential.

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Allison Pennisi ([13:20](#)):

Essential. I love it. Speaking with Erika Amaya, strategic partnership specialist at New York City Emergency Management. And for our listeners, if you want to learn more about how to prepare your business or organization for an emergency, you can visit nyc.gov/preparemybusiness for tips and resources, as well as ready.gov for additional information. Erika, thank you again.

Erika Amaya ([13:46](#)):

Thanks so much for having me.

Speaker 1 ([13:51](#)):

That's this episode 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.