

Speaker 1: 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.

Ira Tannenbaum: Hello everyone. Thank you for listening. I'm Ira Tannenbaum.

Allison Pennisi: And I'm Allison Pennisi. And you are listeners and as always, we thank you for joining [00:00:30] 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 are talking about Big City Emergency Managers, a nonprofit organization that brings together emergency management leaders from across the country. It's designed to share best practices and ensure these areas can better prevent, prepare [00:01:00] for, respond to and recover from emergencies. I also want to welcome back Ira Tannenbaum, who has been a guest on Prep Talk and will be serving double duty for this important conversation.

Ira Tannenbaum: Thank you, Allison. It's good to be back. I'm also thrilled to welcome our guests who are not only part of Big City Emergency Managers, but are leading some of the nation's largest metropolitan areas preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation efforts. Please welcome Mark Sloan, coordinator for Harris County Office of Homeland Security [00:01:30] and Emergency Management. And Mary Ellen Carroll, executive director for the San Francisco Department of Emergency Management.

Allison Pennisi: Thank you Mark and Mary Ellen for being here. Let's get started. We like to say that at the heart of emergency management is coordination. Can you tell our listeners how Big City Emergency Managers achieves this? And can you share with our listeners how participating in this organization supports this goal? Ira, why don't we start with you?

Ira Tannenbaum: [00:02:00] So participating in Big City Emergency Managers is an opportunity for us to baseline and gather information about some of the major events or issues that are facing all of our colleagues. And understand what some of the best minds are thinking about, but also to help us be able to share with our leadership in city hall and other elected officials, what our colleagues across the country are thinking about a similar issue. It gives us the ability to connect with states, but most importantly with the [00:02:30] federal government working directly with cities, because most emergency management typically happens between the federal government and the states. And so this gives us a great chance to hear directly from our partners about what they're considering and what their issues are.

Allison Pennisi: Great. Mark?

Mark Sloan: Well, I appreciate the opportunity to be with you today. Ira, it's great to hear you again, and the partnership that we have with New York City and the Emergency Management Office. As being [00:03:00] the coordinator for Homeland Security and Emergency Management in Harris County, Texas, it gives us this opportunity to come together from all parts of this country. From counties and large metropolitan areas like New York City, San Francisco, Chicago, Seattle, Boston, all the way to Miami and San Diego and Los Angeles to come together and talk about these issues that Ira mentioned that confront us each and every day. From weather events to man-made disasters [00:03:30] and emergencies to potential Homeland Security related issues. And the Big City Emergency Managers allows us the opportunity to sit to down face to face with each other to share our best practices, but also with our federal partners to understand how they're going to help us in the event that something does occur, that we can become better prepared and be able to respond and recover more effectively for the residents that reside within our communities. So again, [00:04:00] I appreciate being here today. Thank you.

Ira Tannenbaum: We're thrilled to have you. Mary Ellen?

Mary Ellen Carr...: Thank you. And also I'm so happy to be here. I agree with both of my colleagues, so I will just echo their comments. I think it also, especially after the last two years, but certainly all of the challenges that we experience as emergency managers, it is a really unique opportunity and benefit [00:04:30] to discuss our shared experiences and really talk about our last meeting. We really talked about how things have changed for emergency management and whether or not it's for the better or the worse since COVID in particular.

So it's a safe place where we can talk about these things with people who uniquely [00:05:00] understand each other. And there really isn't another place or forum or group that I feel like I have that. So I learn so much from my colleagues every time and I'll also add that we have an Emerging Leaders Program that we put our staff through, I think Ira is an alumni, and they also talk about the incredible networking that comes from this. So we come from [00:05:30] disparate states and some of us are counties and some of us are cities, but we learn a lot and we're able to, I think, leverage all of our experience better bring that back to our own constituents.

Ira Tannenbaum: You're right Mary Ellen, I'm a proud alum of class 01 for the Emerging Leaders Program at BCEM. It was a great experience and I developed many relationships that have lasted for [00:06:00] years. Having the two of you on this podcast representing both Texas and California, all the way across the US, we know that larger municipalities or jurisdictions share similar characteristics, but you also have unique hazards or complexities based on your location or your community. So what would you say is the biggest challenge that your respective areas face? Let's start with you, Mary Ellen.

Mary Ellen Carr...: [00:06:30] Thanks, Ira. Yeah, I think that there are many. San Francisco, I think really weathered COVID in a way that we're very proud of. We took very early and aggressive actions and have a very low mortality rate compared to some other cities, many other cities. And so that's things we're very proud of course. But [00:07:00] there are huge impacts from our long shutdown and we're experiencing those now.

So just to list probably the top three or four. Homelessness, which has always been in a challenge for us in San Francisco was certainly exacerbated and continues to be a challenge, much more tricky to address the issue of the challenges for people experiencing homelessness when [00:07:30] you have the constraints of a pandemic and an infectious disease. The opioid and fentanyl crisis, which I cannot tie directly to COVID. But I think that there are tentacles to that. If nothing else, then the trauma and desperation that many people endured during this pandemic. The change in business and in our urban settings not having [00:08:00] activated downtown, businesses not returning and really employees not returning because of these folks still working at home. We have a large tech industry here and that industry has not returned and is uniquely positioned to work remotely.

So we're trying to come back and be innovative, but I would say those three health [00:08:30] and societal issues, and then just really trying to jumpstart. And then I'll just finally add we're also seeing an increase, as we're seeing across the country, but an increase in crime. I really tie a lot of this back to just a lot of desperation that people feel and having got out of this. So our day to day problems are much more exacerbated I think post-COVID than they were before.

Allison Pennisi: Mark, how about you?

Mark Sloan: Mary Ellen, [00:09:00] I can equate a lot of the issues that you're having that are very similar across the country. During this COVID, which is the longest activation of our emergency operation center in history, I think for all of us and the things that have gone on. And on that day, March 2nd of 2020, when we brought everybody together to activate, I reminded everyone in there that our lives were going to change during this [00:09:30] particular incident. To know what was going to happen or how we're going to come out of this is still something that we deal with today. And it's going to be something that we're going to deal with as we move forward.

Our EOC was activated 44 times for other issues. From flooding, tropical weather, hazardous material, issues along the ship channel, protests. The other [00:10:00] issues that constantly are invading our time that we spend in planning and preparation, which I call game day. Is what we do as emergency managers, along with a winter storm that impacted Texas which never has happened to the magnitude of Uri before. Now, I'm dealing with staff issues, I'm dealing with morale issues, I'm dealing with the community wanting to

[00:10:30] listen to government and overcoming those challenges during this crisis.

So there's a lot of things that are tangential that we have to manage. And as you mentioned Mary Ellen, there are things that are societal that people are desperate. There's loss of jobs, homelessness, and there isn't one thing that says that emergency managers are responsible for. We are [00:11:00] a solution preparedness partnership provider that helps create those solutions for our elected officials. But it's also something that our community expects from us and that they deserve. And that's an ongoing effort and constant challenge during the COVID crisis, along with every other thing that we have been dealing with.

Allison Pennisi: Absolutely. You both bring up excellent points here. I would say it cannot be overstated how much [00:11:30] the COVID-19 pandemic has affected every part of our nation. And I know that you both have touched on the cascading impacts that your respective have faced, but let's dive a little deeper here. How are you facing these challenges head on? Mary Ellen, let's start with you.

Mary Ellen Carr...: Yes, thank you. We have a significant opioid, fentanyl crisis in San Francisco. Higher number of people have died from fentanyl overdoses than COVID in [00:12:00] San Francisco during the pandemic, and thousands have been saved by Narcan. So we have a particular part of the city that is the Tenderloin that's particularly impacted. And so the mayor's office asked me and my team to come in and tackle this crisis from an emergency management perspective and organization, and that is what we're doing. It is very complicated and challenging in ways that COVID [00:12:30] wasn't, there are parts of COVID that seem simpler. I think in part because everyone was on board during COVID, it was a global pandemic. There was no question about the existence of a disaster and the clear focus and priority. Right now, we're doing this in the middle of our reopening and trying to get back to life. Really drawing on our lessons learned, drawing on our experience and our relationships developed during the pandemic, to tackle [00:13:00] this crisis head on in San Francisco.

So it's a first for us to take on something like this with the lead being the Department of Emergency Management, but we're honored to do so. And just a lot of coordination continued. So in the beginning you talked about coordination and how BCEM gives us that, and I've talked and written about this. I think there is a really renewed appreciation [00:13:30] for the very specific expertise and skill that we bring to both problem definition and problem solving and coordination that we discussed as a group we're seeing across this country, and so that's what we're bringing to bear. The challenge of that we also have talked about quite a bit is emergency management in general is usually not super well resourced. Certainly we are not [00:14:00] as real well resourced as the fire department or law enforcement or public health. And so I think that's one of the biggest challenges for us and we're trying to address that here in San Francisco.

Allison Pennisi: Thank you for that. And I just want to go back to something that Mark has been quoted as saying, because you talked about this, about helping to eradicate a major public health crisis and a major social crisis in your area. One thing that Mark has said before, he said that the role and responsibility [00:14:30] of emergency managers is evolving and changing and must strive to meet the needs of all disaster survivor, and I think that this is a testament to what you're doing in San Francisco. But I would like to turn the tables over to Mark to ask the same question about cascading impacts and facing these challenges that Harris County is currently facing.

Mark Sloan: Well for us here in the Houston area, in Texas, where we're at. Things that we're looking at is the cascading effects of COVID is the [00:15:00] economic ramifications of this, and I see that across the country. Where cities may be relying on tax revenues or sales revenue, and then there's property taxes and other things. And all of those things are going to be affected and not evenly across the country and some of it's going to take time to see the impacts of that. We're seeing that now with supply chain of the global [00:15:30] market in which we depend upon and the inability to produce various portions of our supply chain that are critical to a variety of our markets, including vehicles or food supply, fuel supply to numerous other things. Even our cellular phones that we depend on global market for are being affected by this. So those [00:16:00] are some of the crisis cascading effects of COVID.

The trust in messaging from government has been something that we're all witnessing, and it doesn't matter if you're a Republican or a Democrat. None of that. It's just trust in what am I being told? And what action do I need to take? And why? Do I believe what I'm being told? And so those are things that we have to build upon [00:16:30] in order for our residents to understand that when we say this is what we know, this is what we want you to do, and be able to support that with timely, accurate, actionable information that they can trust.

The other part of this is building a partnership with our health authorities. In certain parts of the country they've been strong, in other parts of the country they were a silo and not part of what the emergency management community needed. [00:17:00] And I think that those things are being bridged and that gap is closing.

And the last part of this is when do we transition from a crisis to a more normal environment? Sooner or later we're going to have to go to where we can manage this within our health community, our hospital systems and our public health authorities, to be able to get us to a new normal so that we can move forward and resolve some of the [00:17:30] issues that exist from supply chain and the impacts on our personal lives, as well as within our local governments.

Allison Pennisi: Thank you for that. All very important points. Shifting gears a little bit, besides the pandemic, can you each share with our listeners a lesson learned from a

crisis that you carry through your work today? I'm going to turn it to Mary Ellen to start.

Mary Ellen Carr...: Thank you. I think that there have been various crises [00:18:00] that both I've experienced professionally and personally. The biggest thing is just an ability to you remain calm. It's actually a physiological thing I think that you have to learn. There may be some people that are born with it. But to pause before you act. And the greatest image of responding to an emergency could be a firefighter running into a fire [00:18:30] or law enforcement or anyone. You see someone in danger and you go.

And I think in emergency management, first of all, we're not supposed to necessarily be the operations folks who are there. But because we have to coordinate and bring people together are in a crisis, for me, it's always been being able to pause. And even if it feels like it is a slowing down, always it is better [00:19:00] when you can take a beat, get everyone to take a step back for a second and then decide what the next step is. And I know that's a generalization, but I think that it applies for any crisis, both personal, professional, large or small. Can't wait to hear what Mark has to say about that. I always learned something from mark. So, there you go.

Mark Sloan: Well, I appreciate that Mary Ellen. [00:19:30] As I've always said, is that a crisis is game day. That's what we train for. That's what we plan for. This is what we are supposed to be ready for. And so to me, one of the things that I've learned through the numerous emergencies and disasters that I've had to deal with from Katrina and Ike and Harvey and the winter storm Uri and others is that when emergency managers, and you mentioned [00:20:00] this a little bit about operations, become tactical and have to get into the daily operation and the tactics we fail, we stop being strategic. And I try to train my staff and understand that when we no longer think strategically and we are absorbed into the daily activity, we fail and we need to be thinking about tomorrow. So that our first responders, those that do the tactics, [00:20:30] fire, law enforcement, public health, and so many others that are out there dealing with our community in a crisis can get their job done with the appropriate resources, the appropriate plans, and have been trained to be able to do that.

And that was one of the lessons that I learned very early on in 2000s after 9/11, and then moving into Katrina, is that we have to be able to, as a field in emergency management, think about tomorrow [00:21:00] and be successful at that. So that today is done by those that deal with it on the ground, in the field, touching those that are in desperate need for assistance.

Ira Tannenbaum: Thanks, Mark. That was a fantastic answer. Allison, the running joke in Big City Emergency Management through Mary Ellen's point about resources is that Mark is just getting resources all the time. He doesn't even have to ask for them. Whatever you've been doing, [00:21:30] Mark, you keep doing it well. But let's talk for a second about the Harris County Citizen Corps, an innovative award-

winning public preparedness initiative, recognized as a national best practice. Mark, can you tell us how Harris County is highlighting community preparedness and how the program evolved and influenced your work in the community?

Mark Sloan:

Absolutely. Thank you Ira for bringing up Citizen Corps. After 9/11, there was a conversation that took place in the White House with President Bush on how do we better coordinate [00:22:00] communication in all entities? Not only the federal level, but first responders, but also how do we bring our residents of our community together in order to better respond to the emergencies and disasters they're confronted with on a regular basis? From tornadoes, which we just witnessed, to tropical weather or winter storms and blizzards. It's a gamut. And the Citizen Corps programs actually came together to help provide that [00:22:30] opportunity to prepare our community. And we've been recognized, as you mentioned, as a model and a best practice. We've trained over 50,000 individuals in our Community Emergency Response Team program, along with our Volunteers in Police Service program, our Medical Reserve Corps, USAonWatch, and our Fire Corps program.

We've been doing that now for 18 years, and I can't believe that it was 18 years ago that we held our first class and had our first 20 graduates. [00:23:00] And today with over 50,000 and we continue to grow. And a lot of those have moved on, moved to other parts of the country. And Harris County being 4.7 million people, my bosses always tell me I can retire when everyone's trained. I don't ever see training 4.7 million people, but my goal is to do it. And we're constantly getting our community together in a variety of ways to understand what our true risks [00:23:30] and threats are. And if people learn how to take care of themselves, their family, and protect their property in a crisis, that's one less person that first responders are going to have to deal with in an emergency situation.

New York is three times bigger than us, and we know that San Francisco and LA and all the other jurisdictions equally have a large population, but it's up to the individual to make sure that they take time to be prepared for whatever their risk and [00:24:00] threat is. And our Citizen Corps program continues to promote that. And I appreciate the opportunity to talk about it because I'm very proud of the successes that we've had in making our community better aware and better prepared for a disaster.

Ira Tannenbaum:

Fantastic. Just to touch for a moment on the question that Allison brought up before about the complexities and the cascading impacts of COVID. I wanted to reflect for a second on the challenges we faced here in New York City [00:24:30] in looking at some of the issues and how we would factor in the changes that COVID was requiring for us.

So, especially when we were looking at our summer and heat and the concerns that we always have with heat and needing to provide cooling opportunities for those in need, we really had to figure out how we were going to provide those

resources and provide those opportunities in a COVID safe fashion. And thinking each step of the way, every single one of our plans, [00:25:00] we had a fantastic team here who was thinking about just exactly each one of our plans, how do we pull it together? Look at what was going on and make sure that we could do everything in the right format and in the right way.

But let me move on. Mary Ellen, as the executive director of the San Francisco Department of Emergency Management, you oversee operations of San Francisco's 911 center, Emergency Operations Center, and city's emergency public alert and warning system. San [00:25:30] Francisco's Department of Emergency Management also has a robust emergency preparedness campaign, SF72. Please tell us how you lead all of these communication efforts and what is on the horizon for your public warning capabilities.

Mary Ellen Carr...: Thanks, Ira. I always am happy to have the opportunity to remind folks of the 911 dispatchers who work 24/7, 365 days a year, who never stayed home during the pandemic and who've continued to serve the city. [00:26:00] We also talk about that the very first part of our EOC, the very first section that we opened up to support public health for COVID at the time of corona was our Joint Information Center and our public information component. And they are still going as our EOC is still activated, but we are planning on deactivating at the end of the year. But our [inaudible 00:26:30] [00:26:30] will continue to support the communications.

And then during COVID, one of the things that we learned, and what we had to do, was really become so creative and innovative with how we communicated with folks. So we had a very award-winning communications design about staying home and wearing a mask. But what we realized pretty quickly is that it wasn't [00:27:00] resonating with certain parts of our city and it certainly was not effective as we saw communities of color in San Francisco who were not doing as well as our other communities. So we had to learn how to engage with community to translate the messages. And when I say translate, I don't mean language, although we all also obviously translated into different messages. But really to have community present and think about [00:27:30] and contribute to how messages need to look, what languages they need to be in. And then also in what format they go out, because of course we all use our normal social media modes, but there is a pretty good chunk of our population that don't have smartphones, that aren't on Twitter, that don't do social media. And for the most part, those are more vulnerable populations.

So I think that both from our ongoing preparedness campaigns, [00:28:00] we learned a lot, but also just during emergence situations that come across, like an earthquake, we live in earthquake country. How we're going to get information out to people is something that we're constantly thinking about.

And then just to circle back to 911. In California, our 911 system is pretty archaic. I think I can say that. We recently got funding to do the next generation

911, which will be fantastic. But [00:28:30] there are huge limitations on what we can do to serve the public in many ways, and also how much redundancy we can have. And so technology is both our friend and our foe I think in communication. We absolutely need to upgrade our technology, particularly on the 911 side, so that we can have the same technology and capacity that pizza has for delivering [00:29:00] pizza that we literally don't have for 911. But also to think about what about when we don't have technology? So it's both sides of the point. If we have a major earthquake, something that really affects our infrastructure and we lose comms, how challenging that's going to be.

That wasn't the situation for the most part for us under COVID. I know Mark had moments of that on top of everything thing else with the weather and crisis that they had in Texas. [00:29:30] I think those are the two things, it's this dance that we do with technology. You need to go all the way to the top and you want to have the best that you can, but the same time, you have to be analog in order to reach people and save lives and especially that of our most vulnerable populations. So those are my thoughts about it. We have a tremendous team here in San Francisco who have just done incredible work and we're so lucky to have them. [00:30:00] I'm sure that they could go and be incredibly successful with their talents in the private sector, but they're dedicated public servants and we're very lucky to have them on board.

Allison Pennisi:

Thank you for that. And from the New York City perspective, I can tell you that we've seen similar challenges in terms of communication. I think one of the successes that we had for our municipality was the COVID-19 short code messaging service, which I know San Francisco and many other municipalities [00:30:30] had put into place. So for us, we had close to, I think, 900,000 subscribers in English and in Spanish. We also disseminated short messages in Chinese as well to make sure that people were understanding how the city was responding to the pandemic.

But it also highlights the fact, as you mentioned, that you also need to look at things from an analog perspective. We have a very robust community engagement team that they not only [00:31:00] do in-person events working with community and faith-based organizations and members of the public, but one of the things that many of them had to do was they had a shift in pivot and go to a virtual environment doing webinars about emergency preparedness online. So people would have to access the information that way. Sometimes it was a matter of making phone calls to these different stakeholders to provide them with the information as well, creating flyers translated into [00:31:30] multiple languages. So you're reaching the broadest audience possible. Also looking at the 311 system and looking at public messaging, it's a holistic strategy. And Mark said this before, and it's something that I'm also a firm believer in too, you need to have messages that are accurate, that they're timely, that they're coordinated, and that you are working, as a previous first deputy commissioner used to say, we're all working off of the same sheet of music.

Ira Tannenbaum: So, the inclusion of the private sector in each step [00:32:00] of what we do and making sure that we're partner with them in the best way possible. One of the great things about Big City Emergency Managers is we have sponsors that we work with who represent some of the larger organizations, T-Mobile, Target, Esri. Really great private sector partners who come to the table to work with us. They're interested in understanding the challenges that we have, but we're just as interested in understanding the issues that the private sector faces so that we can [00:32:30] go back and work in our municipalities, in our various cities, to make sure that we're leveraging the resources they have. Not just material resources, but their ability to communicate with their employees, a trusted communication pathway for us to be able to share that message that we have and through their networks and to broaden our reach of our particular messages. So it's really exciting to hear the work that Mark, you and [00:33:00] Mary Ellen are doing with the private sector as well.

Allison Pennisi: So to bring it all home, we were talking earlier about how emergency management is a growing profession. So this question is for all of you, and Ira I'm going to start with you on this. Where do you see the field in the next few years and beyond?

Ira Tannenbaum: Wow. The growing profession of emergency management. I see it in this professionalization stage. Really moving away from just emergency management being [00:33:30] something that a retired cop or a retired firefighter moved into because they could deal with emergencies. But really seeing it as something that people will choose actively to engage in as they get their education, realizing that there's so much that an emergency manager can bring to the table in terms of strategic thinking, in terms of organization and in terms of communication capability. The reality is that we need to continue to [00:34:00] improve our ability to share the information that we have in a timely way, but also in a way that people will understand and appreciate and take action on. So I think there are many steps and many resources that are being brought to bear by new graduates from the many emergency management programs out there that are really bringing new technology to the focus of emergency management and not just an afterthought.

Allison Pennisi: Excellent points. Mark, what about you?

Mark Sloan: [00:34:30] Well, I think that as we look at emergency management, it's been evolving really for decades. From civil defense era of what we thought was a singular risk and threat and evolving through the nineties with FEMA. And then in a post 9/11 world, it's continuing to evolve. Some areas of the country have evolved much quicker than the rest of the country. [00:35:00] And I think it's come to a point, the pandemic has proven this, that every emergency manager and partnership that needs to be established at the local level is coordinated through that office. And we need to professionalize, as Ira mentioned, the field across all jurisdictions. As major metropolitan areas, we have dedicated departments and offices with staff. That can't be said for some [00:35:30] of our

other cities, that can't be said for some of our smaller townships throughout the country. It's a duty as assigned and it shouldn't be. Emergency management has been proven to be a catalyst of relationship building and partnerships directly from the elected official to the residents in which we are responsible for.

So over the next few years, I see the emergency management feel growing. We've seen it at [00:36:00] universities across the country, having emergency management programs. More people talking about emergency management as a profession, rather than a duty as assigned. The question that we ask is why do we do what we do? Is because our partner expect that, our elected officials demand it, and most importantly our residents deserve it. And that's where emergency management needs to evolve too. An understanding of what [00:36:30] is it that we do and why?

Mary Ellen Carr...: So I'm happy to jump in. I agree with Ira and Mark, I think that we're going to see an expansion, and we are already seeing an expansion of the field if my experience with my colleagues is any evidence, and here in San Francisco. I also think that we need to reconsider, well not really reconsider, I think we need to expand [00:37:00] the definition and really look at the requirements of experience for people in the field. I believe we need more diversity in the field. I think we've typically in the past seen folks come into this field from either law enforcement or the fire service, which is great. And we need those folks. Sometimes the military.

The types of [00:37:30] problems, as we've been discussing here, that emergency management is tasked to help support and resolve are becoming are complex. It isn't just terrorist events, but even that has become more complicated. We know that it's really all of these constant emergencies that we have and cascading impacts of those, and really the impacts on our society. Of climate [00:38:00] change and extreme weather and civil unrest, not to mention a global pandemic that is seemingly going to endure for a while. So I think that we need to build on our successes, definitely strengthen our core skills, but also expand so that we get more people to the field [00:38:30] with different kinds of backgrounds.

When you talk to people in emergency management, I guarantee you that nine out of 10 people, if not more, ended up in the field somewhat accidentally and not necessarily that was their course of study and what they wanted to do. And that's great. I think we'll see more people that are looking at it as a discipline. But I think there is a benefit to bringing people into the field [00:39:00] that have a more diverse background, because the diversity of the problems that we're dealing with are only growing. So I think it's very exciting. It's exhausting, but I do think it's a fantastically exciting field to be involved in. And I look forward to seeing how things go for the remainder of my career. So thank you for the opportunity to speak to it.

Allison Pennisi: Thank you. As someone who [00:39:30] landed in the emergency management profession by accident, so to speak, I can attest to the fact that the profession is growing and evolving. But what we've seen, we still have a ways to go. And I think that for this field in particular, the goal is to make it fair and equitable for all, which in turn makes our work throughout the disaster cycle fair and equitable for all. So speaking with Mark Sloan and Mary Ellen [00:40:00] Carroll of Big City Emergency Managers, it is rapid response time. And if you are a first time listener, it's 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 Notify NYC.

Speaker 6: New Yorkers love to be the first to know. That's why the city of New York has Notify NYC, so you can be the first [00:40:30] to know when an emergency happens. If there's a fire in your neighborhood, or the weather takes a turn for worse, stay informed with Notify NYC. Get the free app today for your Apple or Android device. You can also visit nyc.gov/notifynyc, call 311, or follow Notify NYC on Twitter, because a notified New Yorker is a prepared New Yorker.

Speaker 7: [00:41:00] You're listening to Prep Talk, the emergency management podcast.
It's time for Prep Talk rapid response.

Allison Pennisi: Okay. We're back for rapid response time. First question, we are going to start with Ira, then go to Mark and then Mary Ellen. What is one emergency item you can't live without? And please do not [00:41:30] say your smartphone.

Ira Tannenbaum: That's a great question. I would say a flashlight. Everywhere I go, I have some sort of flashlight tucked away because I just don't want to end up in the dark.

Mark Sloan: I'm going to have to go with water. I've delivered billions of bottles of water to people that didn't have any and that is going to be my response. I can't live without water.

Mary Ellen Carr...: Okay. This is probably cheating a little bit, but a backup battery [00:42:00] for my flashlight, which is also my smartphone.

Ira Tannenbaum: What do you consider your best success in the field? Let's start with you Mark.

Mark Sloan: My best success would probably be I'm a calming influence to my staff and along to with my elected officials.

Allison Pennisi: Should I ask what your blood pressure is like?

Mark Sloan: Depends on how much coffee I have.

Mary Ellen Carr...: Similarly, a calm demeanor. But [00:42:30] also a good portion of vulnerability. So I'm calm, but I also like to share with folks my own fears or when I go home,

how I deal with the stress of the day. I think that, especially since COVID, being both strong, but showing vulnerability [00:43:00] I think leads to people trusting you more. But also accepting their own vulnerability and seeing that they're human and need to take care of themselves also.

Ira Tannenbaum: I'd say that my best success personally has been much like Mary Ellen said, being able to maintain my relationships with my family throughout the various cycles of emergencies that we've had. And being able to [00:43:30] always rely on them to round me and support me so that I can focus on the work when we need to focus on the work, but enjoy family when the time is appropriate. Name something you learned on the job you never knew beforehand. Mary Ellen, let's start with you.

Mary Ellen Carr...: Sorry. The best places to find porta potties. [00:44:00] I think is-

Ira Tannenbaum: That is definitely something important.

Mary Ellen Carr...: ... very important.

Ira Tannenbaum: Mark, how about you?

Mark Sloan: Well, Mary Ellen, I don't know how to follow that. But, all right. Something that I learned on the job is that in emergency management, it's never the same day twice. Every day is a new opportunity to learn and grow because you come in to the office not realizing that something [00:44:30] like this was going to happen. I'm going to go back to the question is that on the job, this isn't a job, it's a career. And people in emergency management have the coolest jobs and a career that they never even anticipated. So something I learned on the job is that it turned into a career and that I've never done the same thing twice.

Ira Tannenbaum: That's fantastic Mark. I have [00:45:00] to say something that I learned recently through the COVID experience, working on supply chain challenges, is just how complicated it is to really get stuff in the United States of America and the appreciation I have for just in time delivery. The number of steps involved in bringing stuff [00:45:30] in from overseas and getting it to your front door is something that I didn't appreciate beforehand, that I have a much greater appreciation for now.

Allison Pennisi: I love Mark's answer about it's not a job, it's a career. Basically, this field shows you probably underestimate yourself, because there are times that you'll turn around and you're able to have a success that you would've never expected before. And my thing is that I've always known that there were no two days that are the same, [00:46:00] but the fact that I've been able to roll with it. And I didn't ask anybody else what their blood pressure looks like, but mine has always been pretty low. So the fact that I'm able to be in this field and have low blood pressure, that's a win for me. Okay. Last but not least, sum up the future of emergency management in one word. Mark we'll start with you.

Mark Sloan: Well, I wrote down a few of them figuring that I wouldn't go first and that Ira [00:46:30] Mary Ellen would already have absorbed the other words. So, I'm going to start with the easy one. Sum up the future of emergency management, it's about partnerships.

Allison Pennisi: Love it. Mary Ellen?

Mary Ellen Carr...: Expansion.

Allison Pennisi: Ira, what about you?

Ira Tannenbaum: Opportunity.

Allison Pennisi: Fantastic. Speaking with Mark Sloan, Mary Ellen Carroll, and my co-pilot, co-host, and special guest Ira Tannenbaum. Thank you all for this very important conversation [00:47:00] on emergency management across every jurisdiction. We sincerely appreciate the time.

Ira Tannenbaum: Thank you, Mark. Thank you, Mary Ellen.

Speaker 1: 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.