

ARE YOU READY FOR A RUCKUS?



HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED HOW NEW YORK PREPARES FOR AN EMERGENCY?

Students in the College Now program at New Design High School and the Urban Assembly Academy of Government and Law, along with the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP), and teaching artist Fatima Abdul-Nabi, spent a semester investigating how our city prepares for a disaster and who's in charge of making a plan.

Will you be ready if a disaster strikes? After experiencing some small-scale disasters (like the summer of 2011 earthquake) and some bigger ones (like Tropical Storm Irene), we wanted to find out if everyone in our city is prepared in case of an emergency. To find answers, we spoke to five different organizations: the Insurance Information Institute, the Office

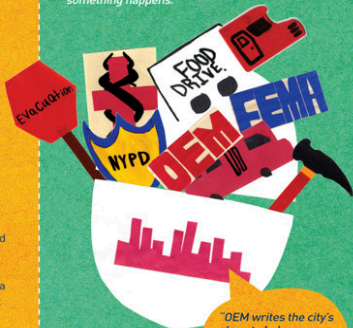
of Emergency Management (OEM), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), United Puerto Ricans of Sunset Park (UPROSE), and the NYC Environmental Justice Alliance (NYCEJA).

We found out that planning for a disaster happens at three levels: individual, community, and government. We learned the government has a plan of action to prepare the city as a whole, and there are clear instructions for individuals, too. But what about a community plan? This booklet is a look into how a community might start thinking about disaster preparedness and why it's important.

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The City, state, and federal governments are responsible for making sure we have the infrastructure in place to respond to an emergency. Even before disaster strikes, public and private organizations, like the Fire Department, NYPD, FEMA, and Con Edison have to work together to make sure everyone knows what to do when something happens.



"OEM writes the city's plans to help prepare the city and respond to emergencies."
- Justin Land, OEM

What

DOES DISASTER PLANNING LOOK LIKE?

Individuals are responsible for making sure they have a "Go Bag" supplied with batteries, a flashlight, a radio, a first aid kit, and important documents like copies of their lease, bank account information, and proof of insurance. They should also make plans with their family on how to get out of the city and where to meet in case of an emergency.

What is a disaster?

"A disaster is something that can harm you, like a flood, a hurricane or a fire." - Christy Chavez, student

"Before a disaster happens, you have to have the right insurance to cover your house after the disaster." - Diosa Melenciano, student

But, what about the community where you live or work or worship? What is the community responsible for and how can they start making a plan in case of an emergency?

"Emergency preparedness as a whole is all of our responsibilities. It's not just FEMA. It's not just OEM. It's not just your school. It's also you. We might all have different pieces but they definitely do overlap."
- Justin Land, OEM



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Who

SHOULD BE

IN CHARGE OF
PLANNING

FOR A

DISASTER ?

Imagine we had to prepare a community for a disaster. What is a community? There is not one definition of how big or small a community is, or what the boundaries are. It can be the neighborhood you live in, the co-op you live in, or the house of worship where you pray.



"People who are really well-educated, or who feel their power, are always the ones that control the discussion. You need to be able to train folks that are grassroots so that they have the tools and can own their voice. Then, when they're in a meeting with an agency, they can articulate what the problems are, what the challenges are, and what they need." - Elizabeth Yeampierre, UPROSE



In many communities, there are people who are leaders, and those leaders can play an important role in helping to prepare for a disaster. They can start a leadership team to kick off a planning process for your community. They usually know a lot of people in the neighborhood and are really good at spreading the word to get more community members involved. For example, a religious leader can set up workshops with congregants on disaster planning. A landlord or co-op board can organize their tenants. Everyone has some skill to bring to the table.

"New York City is a very large city, but if you put some time and effort into it, you can generally find the linchpins in a community. They are someone who knows everyone in that community or has an effect on the community."
- Herman Schaffer, OEM



when

DISASTER STRIKES

PLEASE EVACUATE!!

EVACUATION

MERGE LANES

THIS WAY ONLY

USE CAUTION

"The people that are poorest and have the least resources are the most affected. If you don't have money to get out of town, you're stuck. The poorer you are, the more you rely on the government, the more the government's decisions affect you."

- Eddie Bautista, NYCEJA

CAN YOUR COMMUNITY GET OUT?

Imagine your community is faced with an emergency and a lot of people need to evacuate at once. Can everyone in your neighborhood find a way out? Do you know which streets might be dangerous or which ones are evacuation routes? Are there buses or subways close by, or will you carpool with a neighbor? Do you know the areas where it's safer not to evacuate, or does everyone need to find a way out? (You can find that out at nyc.gov/oem)

If a disaster strikes, an unplanned evacuation can lead to chaos and lots of other mini-disasters along the way. An important part of planning is to make sure the community is prepared ahead of time. A community plan will ensure your community is getting what it needs from the city: more signs, more transportation routes, or safe shelter. Trying to figure it out when disaster strikes is too late.



IS IT IMPORTANT TO STAY IN TOUCH?

Why



-  Hey girl! How are you?
-  Fine, just staying in Nevada, until the disaster calms down.
-  The storm has passed, but now it's time to fix the neighborhood up.
-  What is the community up to?
-  Fixing the library, schools and the stores. Oh, remember that park we grew up in? They took it down to build another building there.
-  What?! Where are our children going to play now?
-  I don't know. They had some meetings about how the community is changing and what we should be building, but a lot of people haven't come back and they're making decisions without them.
-  Hold on! Can't we get people together online to say what they think should happen back home?
-  Sounds good! I'll make a Facebook Page.

So what happens after you've evacuated? Staying in touch with your community is an important piece to being involved with how your neighborhood might recover, and how it might change. Setting up a Facebook page or a Meetup Group could help everyone stay connected even when they're in different places. Maybe community members can follow real-time updates on Twitter. There are many ways to stay connected, but knowing how to is important. How would your community stay in touch with its neighbors?

"We know that we don't have all the funding for rebuilding. The goal is for the community to at least have a plan everybody's bought into, so that when funding becomes available it will be used in a way that the community wants. If the community is not saying anything, it's very hard."
- Sam Benson, FEMA



"During Irene, we had a whole community destroyed. It's a difficult decision: do we rebuild? It's not a decision that the federal government makes; it's a decision that the community makes."
- Sean Waters, FEMA

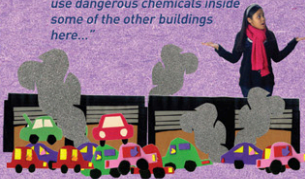


"Have you ever thought what would happen if a hurricane hit YOUR neighborhood? Does your neighborhood have a specific situation that could put community members at risk?"

- Eddie Bautista, NYCEJA

1

"Well, I've noticed a lot of car shops in my neighborhood. There's oily stuff on the ground and I hear they use dangerous chemicals inside some of the other buildings here..."



2

If we had a flood it would be a DOUBLE DISASTER! Not only would we have to worry about the storm, we'd also be swimming in toxic stuff!



3

What could we do to prevent that? How could we protect people from the chemicals? How would we even start changing stuff like this in my neighborhood?



How CAN WE START PLANNING?

4

In most neighborhoods, there's at least one community-based organization where community members can get involved. Individuals or organizations can also go to public hearings to have their say.

"Look! There's a public meeting!"



5

These hearings are an opportunity for community members to show up and share their ideas. Different neighborhoods have different risks depending on where they are and what's close by. These risks all have to be part of the city's disaster preparedness plans.



6

These meetings take time and change doesn't happen overnight.



"You have to start by getting active because that's how you're going to make change in your community. It's hard to do it by yourself. It's only the people who show up that make a difference."

- Eddie Bautista, NYCEJA





The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) uses the power of design and art to improve civic engagement. CUP collaborates with designers, educators, advocates, students, and communities to make educational tools that demystify complex policy and planning issues. We believe that increasing understanding of how these systems work is the first step to better, more equitable, and more diverse community participation.

Urban Investigations are CUP's project-based afterschool programs in which high school students explore fundamental questions about how the city works. Students collaborate with CUP and teaching artists to create multimedia teaching tools that reach audiences in the arts and social justice.

welcometocup.org

College Now is a free City University of New York program designed to prepare NYC's public high school students for success in college. By taking part in College Now, students get acquainted with the demands of college life and work before they get there. College Now offers college-credit courses, college-preparatory courses and activities, and experiential-based summer programs.

collegenow.cuny.edu

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