



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

07-29

September 19, 2007

NYC OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (OEM) POLL FINDS MORE NEW YORKERS ARE PREPARED FOR EMERGENCIES

More New Yorkers say they are prepared and informed about emergencies than said they were prepared or informed in 2005, according to a New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) poll.

The OEM poll found 57 percent of New Yorkers say they are prepared for emergencies such as natural disasters, fires, or power outages. A 2005 poll found that only 49 percent of New Yorkers felt prepared for these types of emergencies.

In addition to being more prepared, 68 percent of New Yorkers say they are informed about what to do in an emergency such as a natural disaster, power outage, or act of terrorism. In 2005, only 55 percent of New Yorkers said they were informed.

“Public education has always been one of the City’s priorities,” said OEM Commissioner Joseph F. Bruno. “The more information we can provide, the easier it will be for New Yorkers to make good decisions during an emergency. We are pleased to see how many people have embraced preparedness, but we still have a lot of work to do.”

Recent disasters also raised public awareness about the importance for emergency planning. Almost two thirds of residents (65 percent) said events like September 11th and Hurricane Katrina have made them more likely to prepare for an emergency situation. The most common reason given for not preparing is lack of consideration. However, the poll also revealed that the proportion of New Yorkers who have done no emergency planning has decreased from 49 percent in 2005 to 38 percent in 2007.

More New Yorkers than ever before keep some type of emergency supplies on hand. The most commonly stocked item is a flashlight (72 percent), followed by drinking water and non-perishable foods (59 percent), personal hygiene items (59 percent), a first aid kit (56 percent), and a battery-operated radio (54 percent). Over half of New Yorkers (53 percent) have assembled these items in a Go Bag— a collection of items you may need during an evacuation.

While only six percent of New Yorkers report having a disaster plan that includes all the elements OEM recommends, over half of New Yorkers (54 percent) have some elements of a plan in place to deal with an emergency. Multiple exits routes are the most common contingency (40 percent), followed by out-of-state contacts (38 percent), and two places to reunite with loved ones (31 percent).

New Yorkers say they are informed about what to do in the event of a disaster generally, but indicate they know more about what to do in the case of a fire or power outage (30 percent), than in a hurricane (12 percent) or a terrorist attack (11 percent). Pandemic flu outbreak topped the list of emergencies New Yorkers are least informed about (29 percent), followed by a terrorist attacks (27 percent), and earthquakes (27 percent).

However, awareness about what to do in various emergencies does not necessarily match up with New Yorkers' ideas about the likelihood particular events will occur. While New Yorkers report being most informed about what to do during a fire or a power outage, they are more likely to believe a terrorist attack is going to occur (77 percent) than a fire in their building (37 percent). Last year the Fire Department responded to 27,817 structural fires, but the city witnessed no terrorist attacks.

The survey of 1,074 New Yorkers in all five boroughs was conducted in June 2007 by Global Strategy Group on behalf of OEM. The margin of error was +/- 2.99 percent.

OEM's Ready New York campaign was created in 2003 to educate New Yorkers about the hazards they may face and encourage residents to prepare for all types of emergencies. Ready New York takes an all-hazards approach to preparing, based on three guiding principles: knowing the hazards in New York City, making a household disaster plan, and stocking emergency supplies. Ready New York's resources now include eight multilingual publications, numerous public service announcements, multimedia advertising campaigns, extensive web content, a speakers' bureau, a reprinting program, corporate partnerships, and continuous community outreach.

For more information about emergency preparedness and the Ready New York campaign, call 311 or visit NYC.gov/readyny. For complete poll results visit NYC.gov/oem.

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