

For Immediate Release

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NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HOSTS COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS SYMPOSIUM: BUILDING A NEW STANDARD AHEAD OF EMERGENCIES

The 11th annual symposium was held at Baruch College with in-person and virtual options

The symposium focused on how community organizers, leaders, youth, advocates and/or government can better prepare ahead of emergencies

March 8, 2023 — When a community is prepared ahead of a disaster, access to resources and aid can speed up the recovery period. By preparing an emergency plan before a disaster strikes, community organizations and community groups can leverage their networks to better position their members and communities to respond and recover from emergencies. On March 7, NYC Emergency Management’s Community Engagement bureau held its 11th annual *Community Preparedness Symposium: A New Standard, Communities Ahead of Emergencies*. This year’s symposium was held at Baruch College’s Vertical Campus with in-person and virtual options.

The 11th annual symposium focused on how community organizers, leaders, youth, advocates, and/or government can prepare ahead of emergencies. NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Zach Iscol, First Deputy Commissioner Christina Farrell, and Assistant Commissioner of Community Engagement Iskra Killgore delivered remarks on the importance of building a network of resources and community connections for emergencies.

“One of NYC Emergency Management’s core responsibilities is to empower community groups and organizations to actively build local emergency plans. Another is to create the network of resources needed for them and their members to recover faster after an emergency. Our annual symposium is an important means to help us achieve both by bringing together a network of resources for community groups, non-profit organizations, businesses, and government agencies to better serve New Yorkers before, during, and after emergencies,” said **NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Zach Iscol**.

Under this year’s theme of *A New Standard: Communities Ahead of Emergencies*, participants heard from various speakers and attended workshops that discussed for example: best practices and considerations for communities to incorporate people with disabilities when planning for emergencies; building centers for community preparedness and response; understanding the impact of disasters on food insecurity; planning to reduce the impact of a disaster, as well as an asylum seekers panel. Yesenia Mata, executive director for La Colmena, a Staten Island-based community-based organization who works to empower day laborers, domestic workers, and other low-wage immigrant workers in Staten Island, served as keynote speaker.

“The 2023 Annual Symposium by the Community Engagement team symposium was a reminder of why we should all continue to work together, non-profits, community groups, city agencies and everyday New Yorkers. We should not just come together in moments of crises; we don’t always need to reinvent the wheel. We can start now, to help all New Yorkers regardless of race, religion, immigration status or gender. And we look forward to working with the New York City Emergency Management team,” said **Yesenia Mata, executive director of La Colmena**.

In addition to Mata, symposium participants and attendees heard from: Mayor’s Office of People With Disabilities Commissioner Christina Curry; Racine Lee Droz, City Harvest’s Director of Food Sourcing and Donor Relations; Lorena Kourousias, Executive Director for MIXTECA; Nilbia Coyote, Executive Director of New Immigrant Community Environment (NICE); Robert Agyemang, New York Director of African Communities Together; and Jason Lyons, Regional Manager for Individual and Community Preparedness with the American Red Cross of Greater New York.

“Emergency management’s work is rooted in building and sustaining a strong connection with our community. As we saw many times this year, we can only be successful with your continued partnership. This event highlights amazing examples of this work in practice and participants will walk away with new tools and strategies to make our communities stronger and more resilient,” said **NYC Emergency Management Deputy Commissioner Herman Schaffer**. “

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PLANNING TOOLKIT

New York City Emergency Management’s Community Preparedness Planning toolkit is an interactive booklet tailored to any community, and can be used by congregations, housing developments, tenant or civic associations, community boards or coalitions, community-based organizations, or Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs). From emergencies like hurricanes and heat waves to fires and utility disruptions, the toolkit reviews the varying threats and hazards New Yorkers may face and provides an overview of the key response roles communities can play to mitigate risks. For more information visit, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/em/ready/community-preparedness.page>.

MEDIA CONTACT: Press Office (718) 422-4888

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