

SPRING 2022

NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT RESERVE CORPS NEWSLETTER

The Latest News From Agency Headquarters



WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER!

NYC Emergency Management Updates

The challenges of the past two years - from the sewer back-up in Ozone Park, Queens, the ongoing COVID-19 activation, numerous heat and winter weather events, to the aftermaths of Hurricane Henri and Hurricane Ida - saw a number of changes to NYC Emergency Management. Not since Hurricane Sandy had the Agency brought in Reserve Corps members to assist, and we are extremely grateful to those of you who contributed during the peak of the COVID-19 activation.

One important technological tool implemented early during the response to COVID-19 was Microsoft Teams, which allowed the City greater ability in remote coordination and response. All EOC activations since March 2020 have incorporated elements of a [virtual EOC](#), which includes coordinating with agency partners in Teams. As we continue to expand our technological capabilities, we expect that virtual coordination will become a key component of the future of emergency management.



EMERGENCY WORKERS CADRE

NYC Emergency Management is kickstarting an exciting new initiative to address the City's historic staffing gaps experienced during large-scale emergencies, including Hurricane Sandy and COVID-19. The NYC Emergency Worker Cadre (EWC) program will solicit volunteers interested in emergency management and deploy them into critical roles within City-run operations outside of the EOC during emergencies. The Agency will keep you updated on program development and how to join and serve your communities in times of need. We plan to follow up with a survey to gauge interest; stay tuned!

NEW AGENCY LEADERSHIP

Mayor Eric Adams appointed new executive leadership in February 2022.



Zachary Iscol, Commissioner

Zachary Iscol previously pulled together over 40 federal, state, and city agencies as the deputy director of Joint New York Medical Station, one of the largest and only successful COVID-19 field hospitals in the country. He recently ran for New York City comptroller.

As a Marine, Iscol served two tours in Iraq and on other assignments throughout Africa and the Middle East. During his second tour of duty, he led a combined unit of US Marines and Iraqi soldiers in some of the heaviest fighting of the Iraq War during the Second Battle of Fallujah, where he was awarded a Bronze Star for valor. He later helped build many of the components of the Marine Corps' First Special Operations Command (MARSOC) and was deployed on one of the first MARSOC teams to deploy overseas.

Over the past decade, Iscol has built and led businesses and a non-profit health care provider, the Headstrong Project. The Headstrong Project now cares for over 1,000 veterans a week, in more than 30 cities, and provides world-class, cost- and bureaucracy-free mental health care to veterans and service members so that they can recover from hidden wounds and get back to the best versions of themselves.

Iscol received his B.A. from Cornell University. He lives in Manhattan with his wife Meredith, their four children, and three rescue dogs.

NEW AGENCY LEADERSHIP



Christina Farrell, First Deputy Commissioner

Christina Farrell has been acting first deputy since October 2021 and acting commissioner since January 2022. Since the beginning of 2022, Farrell managed the citywide response to multiple snowstorms, the tragic Bronx fire, and multiple building explosions. During her time at the agency, Farrell has served as the director of grants, as well as assistant commissioner and deputy commissioner of external affairs. Under her leadership, foundational programs at New York City Emergency Management have been created and grown to national prominence, including the New York City Community Emergency Response Team Program, Ready New York, and Notify NYC.

A city employee for more than 27 years, Farrell started at New York City Emergency Management in 2003.

She is a graduate of Colgate University and has a Master of Public Administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Farrell resides in Whitestone, Queens, with her husband Tim and their four children.

NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT EMPLOYEE PROFILE

How did you find your way to Emergency Management?

Prior to this role, I was part of an organization that worked with government transportation agencies throughout the country, supporting transit improvements in low-income communities and communities of color. After years of travel and work to improve transportation networks across the United States, I was looking for a way to reconnect with my own city. I was attracted to Emergency Management, because I believe in government as a vital resource for underserved communities. Folks with lower income and/or that live in underserved communities are disproportionately impacted by emergency events, and navigating these emergencies without support can be an impossible task for those without financial and social resources. Emergency Management provides a great opportunity to devote my transportation and infrastructure skills to supporting our local communities during times of greatest need.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learned on the job?

To have a plan B - E! Contingencies are the name of the game during emergency events, so it's a good exercise to think ahead about potential alternatives.

What are qualities you admire in your colleagues?

The people of NYC are very fortunate to be served by this amazing group of problem solvers. Regardless of the issue, my colleagues here are sure to develop an effective resolution. Another quality I admire in my colleagues is flexibility. As the Working Group Lead for the Transportation, Utilities and Infrastructure ESF, it's amazing to see how people whose blue sky work is totally unrelated to the subject matter are able to serve as expert coordinators throughout an emergency response. This group is always ready to step up to the challenge.

What is your favorite activation success story?

The Downed Trees Task Force is undergoing a total program overhaul, which includes a move from a manual to an online tracking system. During a storm last August, we piloted the online tracking system during an actual activation of the task force! We were building the plane while flying, creating guide sheets, setting up MS Teams channels, and testing our process in real time. Fortunately, the pilot experience ran smoothly throughout the activation!

What project are you currently working on/excited about?

Our unit is taking part in the interagency group working to develop permanent guidelines for the Open Restaurants program. Our role is to provide an EM perspective on potential design and siting requirements, and it's been exciting and eye-opening to discuss how this program has crosscutting impacts on the operations and scope of so many different agencies.

What's something that people at work or in the Reserve Corps might not know about you?

From taxis to subways, I've worked for the majority of the transportation-related agencies here in NYC!



Nicole Payne
Director, Transportation & Infrastructure
Agency Start: April 2021



NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT RESERVE CORPS PROFILE

How did you find your way to Emergency Management?

I attended Tulane University's School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine for graduate school, and I found myself gravitating towards coursework focused on disasters and nutrition. When I was getting my MPH, I interned at the New Orleans Hazard Mitigation Office, which was working to mitigate Severe Repetitive Loss properties across the city, and the Broadmoor Improvement Association. These experiences showed me how the storm impacted all facets of the city, and how communities were rebuilding - and that really resonated with me. I started attending free courses at the American Red Cross down there, continued them when I moved back to New York City, and eventually became a responder on their staff.

What did you do at the Agency - day-to-day and during activations?

My experience during Hurricane Sandy and the influx of new staff in 2013 really shaped how I wanted the EOC Unit to support the agency (to quote Kelly McKinney, former Deputy Commissioner of Planning and Preparedness - how do we "get big enough fast enough"?). The Agency is unique in that it's incredibly large for a municipal emergency management agency; the people who are working in the EOC aren't necessarily the planners. The EOC Unit created protocols and tools so staff (and agency representatives) understood their role as emergency managers; we built trainings and exercises (working closely with the Trainings and Exercises Units), and captured institutional knowledge through ESF Work Groups, job action sheets, and AARs/improvement planning. Also, we realized that while some employees were eager to work in the field or directly with the public, others weren't comfortable doing so.

That's how the Service Center Support Team and Operations Support roles came into fruition. For the EOC, I started out in Planning Section and eventually became EOC Manager; I also went to the Con Ed Sit Room, JOC, and field. As EOC Manager I briefed agency executives and ensured the teams were on track to meet the day's objectives. A lot of the work was to set a good rhythm for the operational period, coach staff in resolving interagency issues, and maintain situational awareness. Although I was always a member of Red Team, the EOC Unit monitored all activations and supported all teams, which was helpful in bringing lessons learned back to the other teams.

How did your time at NYC Emergency Management prepare you for your current job role?

Working at the agency helped me learn how to work across different stakeholders (who may have competing interests) to reach a common goal. Working in the EOC, especially during large and fast-paced activations, was great in sharpening so many skills - effective briefing, concise communication, project management, multi-tasking, etc.

Any specific memories from your time with us that you carry with you?

Too many to mention! Overall, the camaraderie up in the EOC and in the Training, Exercises, and EOC Division (now known as the Readiness Bureau) will always stay with me. A year or two after Sandy there was an anniversary event where people posted quotes and their experiences on the wall. At the time, it was the biggest activation for a lot of staff, and it was profound reflecting what we had been through.

What is your go-to emergency preparedness item?

A good headlamp! Plus, you can bring it hiking.



Katie Murphy

Current Job: Senior Manager,
Business Continuity at C&S Wholesale Grocers
Agency Role: EOC Director (2014-2019), AAR
Coordinator (2012-2014)



Stay connected to Katie!

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