



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MOIA, OEM DEBUT “WE ARE NEW YORK: THE STORM” EPISODE**

*10<sup>th</sup> Episode Focuses on Preparing English-language Learners for New York City Emergencies*

**November 25, 2013** — Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs Commissioner Fatima Shama and New York City Office of Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph F. Bruno today announced the debut of the 10th “We Are New York” episode, called “The Storm.” “We Are New York,” a project of the City University of New York, is an Emmy Award-winning half hour TV show created to help people learn and practice English. It premieres on NYC TV’s Channel 25 on Monday, December 2, at 10:30pm, and then can be seen regularly on Thursdays at 5pm and on Wednesdays at 7pm. Through the narrative the new episode focuses on teaching English-language learners about how to prepare for an emergency. It centers on a family whose daughter heads to the beach without her phone when severe weather suddenly occurs, causing power outages, rain, and deadly lightning. Neighbors in the apartment building come together to support the family and in the process learn about emergency preparedness and what to do in an emergency. Developed and produced by the City University of New York, the episode uses OEM’s Ready New York curriculum as basis for the episode. In addition to the City’s distribution efforts, New York Cares will use the episode and the “We Are New York” series in the English as Second Language (ESL) classes they support around the five boroughs. It can be seen anytime at [www.nyc.gov/learnenglish](http://www.nyc.gov/learnenglish). The commissioners were joined at the Harlem YMCA New Americans Welcome Center by Jack Lund, President and CEO of the YMCA of Greater New York, Suri Dutich, University Dean for Continuing Education at CUNY, and Gary Bagley, Executive Director of New York Cares.

“We Are New York has helped thousands of immigrant New Yorkers learn important information about New York City services while practicing their English language skills.

Recognizing the importance of having our immigrant communities prepared for emergencies is key and adding this 10th episode on emergency preparedness provides a great opportunity to reach and better support our communities,” said Fatima Shama, Commissioner of Immigrant Affairs. “We are delighted that OEM was able to make this investment and to have worked with the CUNY team, and to have all our partners especially New York Cares and the YMCA of Greater New York as key partners in showcasing WANY.”

“OEM is incredibly proud of this new ‘We Are New York: The Storm’ episode, and plan to distribute it broadly and work through our partners to engage those New Yorkers who are learning English and teach them valuable vocabulary words and strategies to increase their emergency preparedness,” said Commissioner Bruno. “The Storm will introduce viewers to City resources, such as Ready New York and Notify NYC, which can assist them as they plan for and weather emergencies. I would like to thank the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, the City University of New York, New York Cares, and the YMCA of Greater New York for their ongoing dedication to this project.”

“CUNY is delighted to collaborate with OEM on the production of this dramatic new episode in the We Are New York series. The important messages communicated in “The Storm” will help thousands of immigrant New York City families become better prepared to face a weather emergency. The exercises that accompany the episode will also enhance and enrich the viewing experience and provide valuable English language practice,” said Dean Duitch.

“The Y believes that to strengthen the foundations of community, you must help our most vulnerable New Yorkers to access the tools and resources they need to succeed in life,” said Jack Lund, President and CEO of the YMCA of Greater New York. “With Hurricane Sandy only one year behind us, it’s more important than ever before for New Americans to learn about vital city services that are available to New Yorkers. We look forward to sharing the 10th episode of We Are New York to the 19,000 New Americans that we serve each year.”

There are currently nine “We Are New York” episodes, which focus on the lives of immigrants living in New York City. The stories show how New Yorkers can work together to solve problems and create better lives, and assist viewers with limited English proficiency to learn English. Each episode features a story showing people speaking English in important and realistic situations, like going to the doctor, opening a bank account, or talking with a child’s teacher. The show, which also has subtitles in English, shows the characters as they speak English, though slower than the average English-language television show, in order to help the viewer understand the show’s content and learn the language and message of the particular episode.

“Last year we mobilized thousands of volunteers to help New Yorkers who were devastated by Superstorm Sandy. We also witnessed the giving spirit of many New Yorkers who were less affected or unaffected by the storm who helped their neighbors,” said Gary Bagley, Executive Director of New York Cares. “The new ‘We Are New York: The Storm’ episode is timely and effective in spreading the message of emergency preparedness, and will be a fantastic resource for our volunteers to utilize as we gear up to expand our program to teach English to immigrant New Yorkers. I want to thank the Office of Emergency Management, the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, and CUNY for creating an outstanding, important episode.”

In addition to its ongoing outreach efforts to all communities across the five boroughs, OEM will also distribute this episode through the New York City Citizen Corps Council. The Council serves as OEM’s eyes and ears to community groups and the non-profit sector. Citizen Corps engages over 6,000 non-profits through a weekly newsletter and through an ongoing classroom training program. The Council focuses on community resilience and promoting building community-based capacity to respond and recover from emergencies.

New York Cares received a \$30,000 grant from The New York Community Trust to increase its outreach to immigrant, non-English speaking communities. The “We Are New York” series will be foundational in the curriculum in all of the classes that New York Cares and its volunteers lead within its ESL portfolio of classes. New York Cares has recently begun recruiting volunteers to help immigrant New Yorkers practice English and inform them of the City’s services.

The YMCA of Greater New York teaches hundreds of ESL classes every year. Its five New Americans Welcome Centers serve as multilingual information resource and referral

centers, and provide immigrant families with a wide array of instructional, vocational, recreational, family support, and social services. Instructional services include English as a Second Language, Cultural Orientation, Citizenship Preparation, Job Readiness, and Computer Literacy. In addition, some of its Centers offer Adult Literacy and GED preparation classes as well as Substance Abuse and Alcohol Prevention Counseling. There is a New Americans Welcome Center in every borough.

**About the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs**

The Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs promotes the well-being of immigrant communities by recommending policies and programs that facilitate successful integration of immigrant New Yorkers into the civic, economic, and cultural life of the City.

**The City University of New York**

The City University of New York has a storied history of providing a high-quality education to generations of immigrants. The tradition continues. Today’s CUNY students trace their ancestries to 205 countries, and 47 percent of undergraduates have a native language other than English. The University supports New York City immigrants through extensive language immersion programs, workforce development initiatives and its nationally recognized CUNY Citizenship & Immigration Project.

**Staying in Touch with the NYC Office of Emergency Management**

The Office of Emergency Management communicates directly with the public through a variety of tools, including Notify NYC. This is just one way the City of New York communicates urgent information to city residents. In addition to sending e-mails, text messages, and phone calls, the emergency notification office has the ability to activate NYC’s Emergency Alert System (EAS), which sends information immediately via television and radio. Residents can also visit Facebook, Twitter, and the agency’s website, [nyc.gov/oem](http://nyc.gov/oem) for more information. The public can sign up for Notify NYC by calling 311 or going to [www.NYC.gov/notifynyc](http://www.NYC.gov/notifynyc).

MEDIA CONTACTS: Christopher Miller (OEM) (718) 422-4888  
Monica Tavares (MOIA) (212) 788-9389