

NYC Emergency Management Language Access Policy

Background and Mission

New York City Emergency Management (NYCEM) was created by Executive Order in 1996 and was subsequently elevated to departmental status by the City Charter in November 2001.

NYCEM's mission is to plan and prepare for emergencies; educate the public about preparedness; coordinate emergency response and recovery; collect and disseminate emergency information; and seek funding to support preparedness. This mission charges NYCEM to work with other city, state, federal and public/private partners. Emergencies in a city as large and complex as New York require a coordinated response. NYCEM works to ensure information gathering, decision making, and resource allocations are carried out efficiently.

Language Access Goals

During an emergency, NYCEM works to make certain that agencies involved in an emergency response provide a unified, accurate, and timely message to the public. Considering New York City's ethnic and linguistic diversity NYCEM makes every effort to make the information available and accessible to all New Yorkers. While the capability of NYCEM's partner agencies to provide language assistance may vary, we work in tandem with these agencies to support language access to their clients whenever they provide emergency services. As an agency, NYCEM continually evaluates how it interacts with and supports communities in New York City, including populations with Limited English proficiency and other vulnerable populations.

NYCEM Programs

Emergency Preparedness Education

In response to New Yorkers' growing concerns about public safety, NYCEM launched the Ready New York campaign in July 2003. The Ready New York program educates New Yorkers about the hazards they may face and encourages residents to prepare for emergencies. Since its start, the campaign has grown to feature 12 guides that address specific hazards, such as extreme heat, hurricanes and flooding, as well as vulnerable populations, including seniors and people with disabilities and access and functional needs, children and youth, and pet owners. The preparedness guides are currently available in 13 languages online and are easily downloadable online; guides are also available through 311. The guides are available in: English, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, and Yiddish (all guides are printed in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Russian; all other languages are available online).

The NYCEM website is ADA compliant. The majority of the Ready New York guides are also available in audio format. Guides can be accessed via nyc.gov/readynewyork.

Community Programs

NYC Citizens Corps:

The NYC Citizen Corps program is part of the national initiative to bring together local leaders from community organizations, government agencies, local elected officials' offices, the private sector, and volunteer programs to promote community preparedness and volunteerism. The Citizen Corps' goal is to enable New Yorkers to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

In an effort to prepare New York City's immigrant and LEP communities, Citizen Corps in collaboration with Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and City University of New York, produced "[The Storm](#)," the 10th installment of the Emmy award-winning [We Are New York \(WANY\)](#) series geared towards English-language learners. The 25-minute episode focuses on emergency preparedness and access to City resources during emergencies and can be used in conjunction with a [toolkit](#) of Ready New York preparedness tools and learning materials developed specifically for adult language learners. The toolkit, produced by NYC Citizen Corps, is designed for use by English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors, community-based groups, and volunteer conversation group leaders interested in helping New Yorkers improve their English while learning how to plan, prepare, and get informed during emergencies. The WANY program offers an innovative approach to addressing barriers to preparedness education and information among linguistically isolated communities through incorporating various outreach and programmatic strategies, and leveraging local level community networks in building preparedness efforts.

NYC CERT (Community Emergency Response Teams)

NYCEM also manages NYC CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) program. This program features over 50 community-based teams that are made up of local volunteers trained to engage their communities in disaster preparedness and emergency response. NYC CERT works to recruit a diverse group of residents that accurately represent the composition of their community. These volunteers are active in assisting their family, friends, neighbors, and communities before, during, and after emergencies. The NYC CERT program works with the leadership of each team to improve the language capacity of their members by recruiting members that speak languages other than English. By having members that speak languages commonly found in their communities, the teams are better able to serve their communities.

NYCEM's Language Access Coordinator maintains a database of the language capacity of CERT members who are called to conduct Ready New York emergency preparedness presentations in languages other than English and assist emergency operations when there is a need for translation or interpretation services. CERT members also review the translations of our guides and other printed materials to ensure cultural and linguistic consistency.

Community Outreach

NYCEM has developed outreach strategies to work with community groups, social service providers, schools, and other agencies to promote and publicize the availability of translated in-language material. Together with other agencies and community partners working with LEP residents, NYCEM has been utilizing proactive strategies to disseminate translated materials. Targeted mailings, direct community outreach and media coverage to ethnic media outlets are just a few examples.

Emergency Situations

During emergencies NYCEM works with the lead agency to ensure that language needs are identified and that language translation/interpretation assistance is provided to the degree practicable/possible.

Should assistance/reception centers be activated, the leading service agency is responsible to provide language assistance through professional services. In addition, each agency providing services at an assistance or reception center is responsible for providing language assistance for their clients. Signage at assistance/reception centers, flyers and necessary informational materials will be translated into the required languages and available for distribution at the centers.

NYCEM plans address the need for language assistance at service centers and lead agencies are identified for providing services to affected residents. The lead agency assumes the responsibility for language assistance based on Local Law 73 and the Executive Order 120 on Language Access. Updated information is provided to 311 operators on a regular basis, and 311 services are available in excess of 160 languages. The need for language assistance and the provision of language services is monitored by members of External Affairs and Human Services units.

NYCEM's Language Access Coordinator maintains a list of bilingual/multilingual staff that can conduct emergency preparedness presentations in languages other than English and assist emergency operations when translation and interpretation services are needed.

The NYCEM Language Access Implementation Protocol shall be reviewed and revised annually, or as necessary. The agency's Language Access Coordinator shall be responsible for the review and revision of the protocol.