



How Prepared Are We, New York?



A report by NYU's Center for Catastrophe Preparedness & Response and the American Red Cross in Greater New York

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes the results of a New York City-wide survey indicating that while most New York residents have taken important preparedness actions, there is still more work to be done. Of the households surveyed, 17-percent report that they are much more prepared than this time last year, 22-percent are somewhat more prepared, and 52-percent are about as well prepared. Only seven percent have become less prepared over the past year. Still, many have not taken tangible steps to prepare for emergencies. A majority claim to have preparedness plans, though nearly seven in ten households with plans report having never tested them. Half of respondents say they have put together emergency supply kits, but most of these kits are incomplete. Fortunately, many would like to become better prepared by receiving more preparedness information and training. The report concludes with recommendations on how to build on existing preparedness efforts, based on New Yorkers' preferred methods of receiving preparedness information and training.

KEY FINDINGS:

Based on a telephone survey of 1,000 adults living in New York, this analysis suggests that...

New Yorkers are better prepared than they were a year ago...

- 39% say they are more prepared than they were a year ago, with only 7% saying that they are less prepared

Half of New Yorkers have emergency supply kits...

- 50% report having emergency supply kits in their homes, with a majority of these kits having key supplies including a flashlight (90%), a radio (75%), and key phone numbers (63%)

Many New Yorkers have go bags for evacuation ...

- 58% of New Yorkers say they are prepared for an emergency which would require them to evacuate their homes and leave the immediate area for up to three days
- 32% say they have go bags. Most of these go bags have key items including: a flashlight (89%), bottled water (81%) and nonperishable food (57%)

Many New Yorkers have an emergency plan...

- 63% have a household emergency preparedness plan
- 67% say they are very prepared or somewhat prepared to shelter in their homes without power or water for a period of three days

A majority of New Yorkers are likely to follow the City's guidance in a catastrophe...

- 81% are likely to follow evacuation orders from City government, while 90% would follow orders to stay in their homes during a catastrophe

...But there is more work to do:

- Many lack the emergency supplies they need to shelter in their homes, and most lack go bags of supplies they would need to bring with them in an evacuation.

...But most emergency kits are incomplete

- Of the 50% of respondents who say they have emergency supply kits in their homes, just 55% have enough food, and only 36% have enough water to shelter in their homes without power during a serious emergency

...But most are still underprepared for evacuation

- Two in three report lacking the critical supplies they would need to take with them during an evacuation, such as critical identification documents, food and water
- 53% of New Yorkers say they plan to rely on cars and taxis in an evacuation of the city, even after highway gridlock reigned in the evacuations of gulf coast cities in 2005

... But most people with a plan have never practiced it

- 69% of respondents with a household preparedness plan say they have never practiced it
- 36% of respondents admit they have no emergency plan for their households and no way to reunite with family and friends during an emergency

...But people need more and clear information

- The most common reason respondents give for not being prepared is that they are not receiving enough information (34%), or that the information they have received is unclear or conflicting (27%)

INTRODUCTION

The findings of this survey suggest that New Yorkers are better prepared to deal with emergencies than they were a year ago. Four in ten New Yorkers report being more prepared, with a majority having taken key preparedness actions, such as developing an emergency plan or putting together a supply kit.

Still, there is much work to be done to help New York residents prepare. Many still lack critical emergency supplies, preparedness information and plans for what to do in an emergency. Just 17-percent of New Yorkers say they have received specific preparedness information or training. This lack of direct education is reflected in confusion over the specific steps everyone should take to be ready for the next disaster. For example, while the survey suggests that 50-percent of New Yorkers have emergency supplies in their homes, a majority of these kits lack the water and food residents would need to shelter in their homes during an emergency. It is also reflected in the 53-percent of respondents who say they plan to rely on cars or taxis, instead of public transit, to evacuate the city in an emergency. Based on recent car-centric evacuations of other cities, like New Orleans and Houston, relying on cars and taxis could prove problematic.

FIGURE I: EMERGENCY SUPPLY KITS MOST LIKELY TO CONTAIN...

(Of those who reported having an emergency kit) “Does your emergency supply kit contain:

- 1) Three gallons of water per person in your household?
- 2) Three days’ worth of nonperishable food per person?
- 3) A contact card or phone numbers for friends and family, including out of state contacts?
- 4) A First-Aid kit?
- 5) A battery-powered or hand-cranked radio?
- 6) A flashlight with spare batteries?”

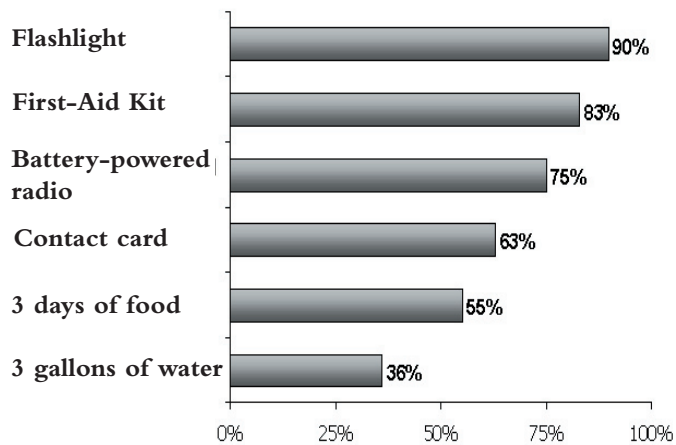
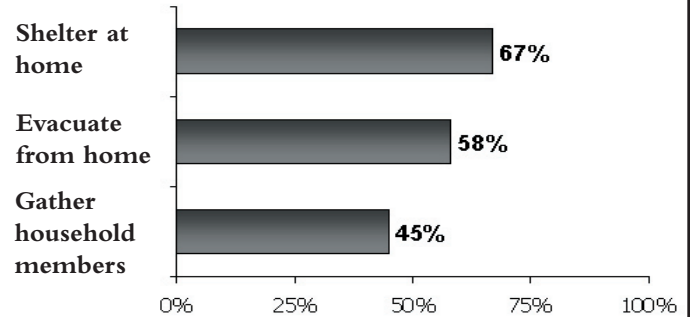


FIGURE II: NEW YORKERS FEEL BEST PREPARED TO SHELTER IN THEIR HOMES IN AN EMERGENCY

How prepared are you for an emergency which would require you to:

- 1) Evacuate your home and leave the immediate area for a period of three days?
- 2) Shelter in your home, without being able to go out, without power, phones or other services for a period of three days?
- 3) Have household members gather, without being able to communicate directly with them, at a pre-designated meeting location?



A MAJORITY OF HOUSEHOLDS REPORT TO HAVE EMERGENCY PLANS, BUT THEY ARE OFTEN INCOMPLETE AND RARELY PRACTICED

A majority of respondents, 63-percent, say their household has elements of an emergency preparedness plan. This marks a 12-percent increase from a similar survey conducted in July 2005, which showed only 51-percent of New Yorkers had an emergency plan.

However, these plans are often incomplete. Only 13-percent of respondents reported that their plans include all of the key recommended elements, which generally include two places to reunite with family and friends, more than one exit route out of the city, contact information for a friend or family member who lives out-of-state, and written copies of that information.

Most respondents say they have not practiced their plans:

- 69-percent of respondents with an emergency plan have never practiced it.
- 12-percent practiced their plans more than one year ago
- 16-percent have practiced their plans within the last year.

Communicating with and gathering household members in an emergency is among the most problematic aspects of disaster planning among survey respondents. Fully 48-percent of New Yorkers say they are unprepared for an emergency which would require them to meet up with their household members without being able to communicate directly with them.

MANY NEW YORKERS REPORT HAVING AN EMERGENCY SUPPLY KIT, BUT MOST OF THESE ARE INCOMPLETE

New Yorkers feel best prepared to shelter in their homes in case of a localized emergency. Sixty-seven percent of New Yorkers say they are very prepared or somewhat prepared to shelter in their homes without power or water for a period of three days.

While many respondents say that they are prepared, only half of New Yorkers have actually taken steps to keep an emergency supply kit on hand in the event that they need to take shelter in their homes.

A strong majority of respondents with emergency supply kits report having: a battery-powered radio (75-percent), a first-aid kit (83-percent) and a flashlight with spare batteries (90-percent).

However most of these kits lack some of the supplies considered critical to sheltering in place.

- Just 55-percent of New Yorkers with supply kits have three days of nonperishable food on hand
- 36-percent have three gallons of water per person in their household.
- 63-percent have a contact card or list of phone numbers for family and friends, including out of state contacts.

These data suggest that New Yorkers are best prepared to ride out localized or “routine” emergencies like fires and temporary blackouts, but that they are seriously under-prepared for a catastrophe that severely disrupts the city’s infrastructure.

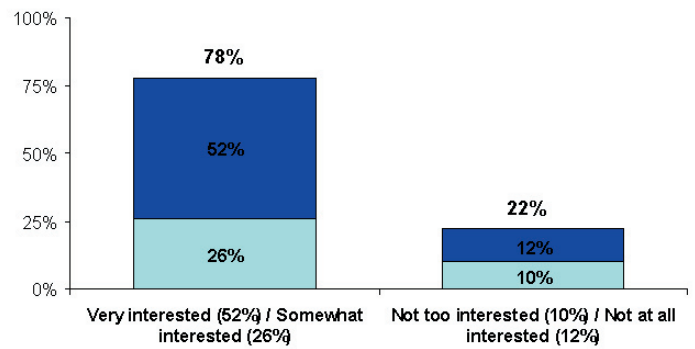
MANY NEW YORKERS SAY THEY ARE PREPARED FOR EVACUATION, BUT ONLY ONE-THIRD HAVE THE NECESSARY SUPPLIES

Based on the survey results, most New Yorkers may be unprepared for a catastrophic incident which would require the evacuation of parts, or all, of the city. While 58-percent of respondents say they are prepared to evacuate their homes and the immediate area, just 32-percent report having go bags containing the supplies New Yorkers would need to take with them in an evacuation.

Most of these go bags contain the recommended key items, such as bottled water (81-percent), a flashlight (89-percent), hygiene products (84-percent), copies of important identification documents (76-percent), and contact information for friends or relatives who live out of state (75-percent).

FIGURE III: NEW YORKERS WANT MORE PREPAREDNESS INFORMATION

“How interested would you be in receiving information on how to prepare your household for a potential emergency?”



Still, many of these go bags lack critical supplies:

- 57-percent of go bags contain nonperishable food such as granola bars or energy bars
- 59-percent include cash or Traveler’s Checks
- 70-percent contain a battery-powered or hand-cranked radio

In the event of an evacuation, the survey suggests that most New Yorkers plan to rely on cars and taxis to evacuate. Assuming all modes of transportation were open:

- 53-percent say they would drive or take a taxi out of the city
- 26-percent say they would use public transportation
- 10-percent say they plan to walk

Heavy reliance on cars and taxis for an evacuation could prove problematic in a large-scale evacuation of New York City, as illustrated by the gridlock-plagued evacuations of Houston and New Orleans in the summer of 2005.

The survey suggests that, if a major evacuation became necessary, a majority of New Yorkers would follow the guidance of New York City authorities on whether to evacuate their homes or shelter in place:

- 81-percent say they would be very or somewhat likely to evacuate if ordered by city authorities
- 90-percent say they would follow orders from the City to stay put in their homes during an evacuation.
- 15-percent say they would be unlikely to follow orders to evacuate
- 6-percent say they would be unlikely to follow orders to stay put.

WHY NEW YORKERS ARE NOT MORE PREPARED

The most common reason New Yorkers give for not being more prepared for emergencies is that they do not have enough information. Thirty-four percent of respondents say they are not sure how to prepare because they do not have enough information. Twenty-seven percent say that they are unprepared because they have received unclear or conflicting information.

FIGURE V: HOW NEW YORKERS PREFER TO RECEIVE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS INFORMATION

(Of those who are interested in receiving information on how to prepare their household for an emergency)
“What information formats would you prefer?”

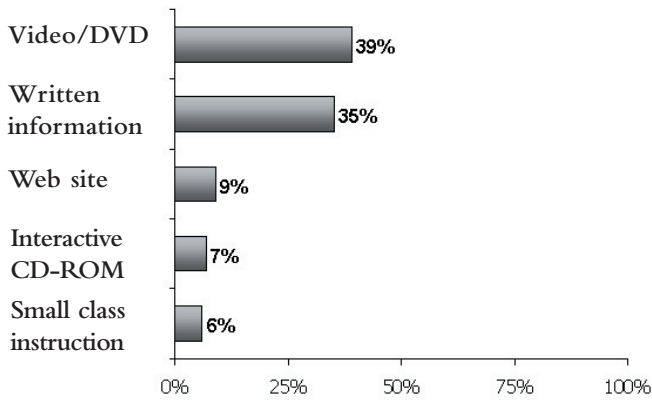
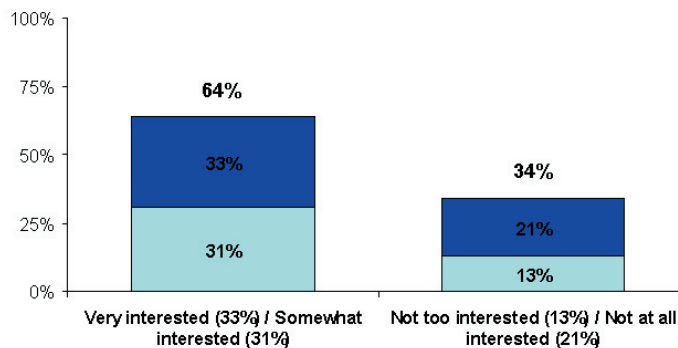


FIGURE IV: NEW YORKERS ARE INTERESTED IN CPR OR FIRST-AID TRAINING

“How interested would you be in receiving training in either CPR or First-Aid training?”



METHODOLOGY

This telephone survey of 1,000 adults age 18 and over living in New York City was conducted on behalf of CCPR and ARC/GNY by Princeton Survey Research Associates International between Feb. 28 and Mar. 15, 2006 and has a margin of error of plus or minus four-percent.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO FURTHER IMPROVE PREPAREDNESS

Fortunately, demand is high for clear information and training to improve household preparedness. To further improve preparedness among New York residents, we recommend that preparedness efforts focus on providing clear and coordinated preparedness information and training.

RECOMMENDATION 1: CAPITALIZE ON NEW YORKERS’ DESIRE FOR MORE CLEAR AND CONSISTENT PREPAREDNESS INFORMATION

New Yorkers want to become better prepared. Indeed, a vast majority (78-percent) of New Yorkers say they are very or somewhat interested in receiving information on household preparedness. By far, New Yorkers prefer this information in DVD/video format (39-percent) or written and printed in detail (35-percent).

To capitalize on New Yorkers’ desire for more information, we recommend that citizen preparedness continue to focus on new methods for conveying preparedness information. For example, we recommend that information both continue to be transmitted in written information and new media, such as DVDs and interactive CDs.

RECOMMENDATION 2: CAPITALIZE ON NEW YORKERS’ INTEREST IN RECEIVING DISASTER AND PREPAREDNESS TRAINING

New Yorkers are interested in receiving disaster and preparedness training. Sixty-four percent of residents are interested in receiving CPR or First-Aid training. Forty-percent are interested in receiving training to be a disaster volunteer locally or nationally.

New Yorkers’ interest in receiving disaster and preparedness training presents a dramatic opportunity to increase preparedness. Since many New Yorkers are interested both in routine emergency training, such as CPR, and in becoming a disaster volunteer, continued training opportunities are vital to continue the upward preparedness trend.

RED CROSS RESPONSE TO IMPROVE PREPAREDNESS

In response to the results of this survey of New York City residents, the American Red Cross in Greater New York is committed to helping every household in New York City prepare for emergencies. In the coming months, ARC/GNY will:

EXPAND SUCCESSFUL OUTREACH PROGRAMS

ARC/GNY will expand the number of *Ready New York* and *Prepare New York* programs in all boroughs. *Ready New York* is a free two-hour event dedicated to preparing individuals and families for emergencies. Attendees receive a 45-minute emergency preparedness presentation followed by access to information supplied by emergency experts from the Fire Department, Police Department, and the New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM). *Prepare New York* is a free 45-minute emergency preparedness presentation teaching New York City residents how to create a plan, build a supply kit, and keep loved ones safe and informed during times of disaster.

STRESS IMPORTANCE OF READINESS

The Red Cross will aggressively continue to educate the public about the importance of having readily accessible and updated supplies for emergencies and for “Go Bags” if evacuation or temporary relocation is necessary. ARC/GNY will continue to provide guidance about the supplies needed in a go bag and will offer additional suggestions for disaster preparedness tailored to various segments of the population such as senior citizens, children and pet owners.

DIVERSIFY INFORMATION FORMATS

Preparedness information will continue to be distributed on CDs and now also will be offered in DVD format and in multiple languages.

Furthermore, ARC/GNY will increase the amount of preparedness information accessible on its web site. It will become easier to locate, navigate and understand. A special Spanish language section with preparedness information will be created.

BROADEN COMMUNICATIONS WITH RESIDENTS

ARC/GNY maintains offices, staff and volunteers in each of the five boroughs. It will aggressively broaden communication with citizens to help them respond to emergencies through programs offered by the Red Cross and those offered in schools and at community events. ARC/GNY will continue to be visible at public events such as street festivals, fairs and neighborhood programs to explain the Red Cross role in helping residents prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. Printed preparedness materials will be distributed in multiple languages.

NYU CCPR RESPONSE TO IMPROVE PREPAREDNESS

Building on the results of this survey, NYU’s Center for Catastrophe Preparedness and Response is undertaking a broad research program that will:

ASSESS THE STATE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED BUSINESS PREPAREDNESS IN NEW YORK

In June, NYU and the ARC/GNY will release another comprehensive report on the preparedness of small and medium sized businesses in New York. This report will analyze existing business preparedness activities and how to improve preparedness among New York’s small and medium sized businesses.

INITIATE NEW NYU RESEARCH ON URBAN PREPAREDNESS

Recognizing NYU’s unique characteristic of being one of the nation’s premier research universities located only two kilometers from Ground Zero, NYU will launch a new project focusing on urban security issues, such as the history of disaster planning programs, how social factors may enhance existing programs, and the state of crisis communications.

EXPAND NYU CATASTROPHIC PREPAREDNESS RESEARCH

Building on existing research efforts on catastrophic preparedness, NYU will expand its efforts to help improve the preparedness of citizen groups and vulnerable populations such as the elderly and disabled.

APPENDIX: PREPAREDNESS BY BOROUGH

MANHATTAN

How well prepared is Manhattan compared to the rest of the city?

QUESTION	MANHATTAN	NEW YORK CITY
How prepared are you for an emergency which would require you to shelter in your home, without being able to go out, without power, phones or other services for a period of three days?		
Very/Somewhat prepared	23% / 44% (67%)	23% / 43% (67%)
Not too/Not at all prepared	13% / 19% (32%)	12% / 18% (31%)
Is your household more prepared than it was one year ago?		
More prepared	27%	39%
About the same	62%	52%
Less prepared	9%	7%
Does your household have an emergency supply kit available --that is, a kit to be used at home in case of an emergency?		
Yes	41%	50%
No	58%	49%

- 41% of Manhattan residents report having a supply kit, below the citywide average of 50% and the lowest rate in any of the five boroughs.
- 23% of Manhattan residents report having a “go bag” of supplies to take with them in an evacuation, below the citywide average of 32% and the lowest rate in any of the five boroughs.

APPENDIX: PREPAREDNESS BY BOROUGH

THE BRONX

How well prepared is the Bronx compared to the rest of the city?

QUESTION	THE BRONX	NEW YORK CITY
How prepared are you for an emergency which would require you to shelter in your home, without being able to go out, without power, phones or other services for a period of three days?		
Very/Somewhat prepared	16% / 50% (66%)	23% / 43% (67%)
Not too/Not at all prepared	14% / 20% (34%)	12% / 18% (31%)
Is your household more prepared than it was one year ago?		
More prepared	41%	39%
About the same	54%	52%
Less prepared	4%	7%
Does your household have an emergency supply kit available --that is, a kit to be used at home in case of an emergency?		
Yes	56%	50%
No	44%	49%

- 51% of Bronx residents surveyed say they are prepared for an emergency which would require them to evacuate their homes, lower than the city average of 58% and the lowest rate in any of the five boroughs.
- At the same time, 61% of Bronx residents report having a household emergency plan, the second highest rate in the five boroughs.

APPENDIX: PREPAREDNESS BY BOROUGH

QUEENS

How well prepared is Queens compared to the rest of the city?

QUESTION	QUEENS	NEW YORK CITY
How prepared are you for an emergency which would require you to shelter in your home, without being able to go out, without power, phones or other services for a period of three days?		
Very/Somewhat prepared	27% / 37% (64%)	23% / 43% (67%)
Not too/Not at all prepared	17% / 18% (35%)	12% / 18% (31%)
Is your household more prepared than it was one year ago?		
More prepared	43%	39%
About the same	50%	52%
Less prepared	4%	7%
Does your household have an emergency supply kit available --that is, a kit to be used at home in case of an emergency?		
Yes	59%	50%
No	40%	49%

- 59% of Queens residents report having a supply kit, above the citywide average of 50% and the highest rate in any of the five boroughs.
- However, just 31% of Queens residents surveyed report having the three gallons of water per household member considered vital for sheltering in place. That is lower than the citywide average of 36%, and the lowest rate in the five boroughs.

APPENDIX: PREPAREDNESS BY BOROUGH

BROOKLYN

How well prepared is Brooklyn compared to the rest of the city?

QUESTION	BROOKLYN	NEW YORK CITY
How prepared are you for an emergency which would require you to shelter in your home, without being able to go out, without power, phones or other services for a period of three days?		
Very/Somewhat prepared	27% / 42% (69%)	23% / 43% (67%)
Not too/Not at all prepared	10% / 18% (28%)	12% / 18% (31%)
Is your household more prepared than it was one year ago?		
More prepared	44%	39%
About the same	45%	52%
Less prepared	9%	7%
Does your household have an emergency supply kit available --that is, a kit to be used at home in case of an emergency?		
Yes	47%	50%
No	52%	49%

- 61% of Brooklyn residents report having three days' worth of nonperishable food per household member available in their emergency supply kits, more than the citywide average of 55% and the highest rate in the five boroughs.
- 33% of Brooklyn residents report having a "go bag" of supplies to take with them in an evacuation, the second lowest rate in any of the five boroughs

APPENDIX: PREPAREDNESS BY BOROUGH

STATEN ISLAND

How well prepared is Staten Island compared to the rest of the city?

QUESTION	STATEN ISLAND	NEW YORK CITY
How prepared are you for an emergency which would require you to shelter in your home, without being able to go out, without power, phones or other services for a period of three days?		
Very/Somewhat prepared	30% / 48% (78%)	23% / 43% (67%)
Not too/Not at all prepared	12% / 10% (22%)	12% / 18% (31%)
Is your household more prepared than it was one year ago?		
More prepared	43%	39%
About the same	54%	52%
Less prepared	1%	7%
Does your household have an emergency supply kit available --that is, a kit to be used at home in case of an emergency?		
Yes	54%	50%
No	46%	49%

- 70% of Staten Island residents report having some elements of an emergency preparedness plan in place, higher than the citywide average of 57% and the highest rate in the five boroughs.
- At the same time, just 7% of Staten Island residents surveyed say they practiced their emergency plan in the last year -- the lowest rate in the five boroughs.