

# STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE THROUGH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE IN A POST-COVID ERA

## ACTION STEPS FOR OLDER NEW YORKERS



This resource highlights the results of The New York Academy of Medicine's (NYAM) 2023 report, *[Strengthening Community Resilience: Supporting Older Adults Through Emergency Preparedness and Response in a Post-COVID Era](#)*. This report can be used to help New Yorkers age 65+ prepare for and respond to future pandemics and weather emergencies, and is an update to NYAM's 2014 report *Resilient Communities: Empowering Older Adults In Disasters & Daily Life*.<sup>1</sup>

Older New Yorkers have always been known for their resilience in the face of adversity. Since Superstorm Sandy in October 2012, New York City has endured worsening natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic. The ongoing climate crisis poses new dangers as

temperatures creep higher, leading to more frequent and intense storms.<sup>2</sup> In addition, more than 45,000 New York City residents have died of COVID-19 since the first case in February 2020.<sup>3</sup> These crises have tested the resilience of New Yorkers and the communities they live in—and, in particular, older adults whose physical and mental health have been deeply impacted by the virus. NYAM sought the insights and perspectives of older adults across the boroughs and aging service professionals to understand the ways in which older New Yorkers have shown resilience in responding to the pandemic. The goal of this work is to inform policymakers, researchers, practitioners, caregivers, and older adults themselves, on how the 65+ population—in New York City and beyond—can prepare and respond in the face of future emergencies.



## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Examples of lessons learned from older adults and aging service professionals about how to prepare for and remain safe during emergencies:

### PARTNERSHIPS

- Work with a neighbor or tenant association leader to schedule regular meetings on emergency planning in your building.
- Seek out emotional and spiritual support from faith-based organizations during disaster recovery.

### EDUCATION

- Call 3-1-1 to find information about resources (available in multiple languages) relevant to older adults during a disaster.
- If you are connected with a local aging service organization (which you can find at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/find-help.page>), contact them to learn about their emergency plans.

### EFFICIENCY OF SERVICES

- Contact your building management about opportunities for identifying floor captains, developing building-specific emergency plans and checklists, and clarifying who to call during an emergency.
- Contact your building management to request disaster preparedness tools to be installed and monitored in your home if available, such as emergency lighting in stairwells and smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

## ACCESS TO SERVICES

- Ensure that you have access to internet to receive up-to-date information about emergencies and available services.
- Contact a technology education program, such as your local library or SeniorPlanet from AARP4 or calling at 888-713-3495, to sign up for a technology training specifically geared towards older adults.
- Obtain portable chargers for your home to ensure you can remain digitally connected with friends, family, and healthcare providers during power outages.
- Contact NYC Aging's hotline Aging Connect at 212-244-6469 for transportation and other services available during emergencies.

If you have any comments about this report or anything else related to community resilience, please email: [healthyaging@nyam.org](mailto:healthyaging@nyam.org).

To read a copy of the full report, please visit: <https://www.nyam.org/community-resilience-report/>. This report was made possible through the generous support of The New York Community Trust.

### REFERENCES

1. Goldman, Finkelstein, Schafer, Pugh. Resilient Communities: Empowering Older Adults In Disasters & Daily Life. Published 2014. Accessed June 14, 2023. <https://www.nyam.org/publications/publication/resilient-communities-empowering-older-adults-in/>
2. AARP, [2022]. Disaster Resilience Toolkit. Retrieved from: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2022/aarp-disaster-resilience-tool-kit.html>
3. NYC Health. COVID-19: Data Trends and Totals. Published n.d. <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data-totals.page>
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