

SELECT RECOMMENDATIONS

(SEE REPORT FOR FULL SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS)

FOR NEW YORK CITY GOVERNMENT:

- Should make sure people are prepared to evacuate and that buildings have information with regard to where people can evacuate.
- Should provide transportation so people can evacuate.
- Should assure the public that shelters are safe and properly staffed and put protocols in place that provide people with safety and security.
- Must ensure that information at shelters and about the availability of shelters is available in at least Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish and Russian languages.
- Should make all notices, flyers and announcements available in, at minimum, Spanish, Chinese and Russian, the most common languages of Lower East Side residents in addition to English as well as any other languages that are prevalent in a given community. These should be posted prominently in buildings and public spaces in the community.
- Should invest in and provide charging stations that are solar powered and can work when electricity is out. Cooper Lumen, a solar powered charging station, created by Cooper Union students and LES Ready organizations is one example.
- Must improve communication with residents before, during, and after a natural disaster and pay

special attention to ensuring that seniors, people with disabilities and people with limited English proficiency get the information that they need.

- Need to improve communications with local organizations and work to ensure relief efforts are coordinated and disaster preparedness plans are complimenting one another.

FOR LES READY:

- Provide ongoing education and awareness campaigns; including showing people the flood maps and other relevant information.
- Provide training for residents on how to shelter in place: what supplies are needed and/or what actions should be taken if residents are without power, water, heat, etc.
- Make sure people are prepared to evacuate, that buildings have information with regard to where people can evacuate and that families have a plan.
- Provide training for volunteers that are doing outreach: have LES Ready certification course for before disaster and then also provide abbreviated (30 minutes or less) training for volunteers during emergency.
- Have clear communication plan between the City and LES Ready to access and get supplies for distribution (See LES Ready Disaster plan for detailed communications plan).

LES READY MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

American Red Cross
Asian Americans for Equality
Association of Latino Business Owners and Residents (ALBOR)
Catholic Charities
Chinese-American Planning Council
Chinese Progressive Association
Community Board 3
Cooper Square Committee
Disaster Distress Helpline
East Side Tabernacle
FEGS Health and Human Services
Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES)
Grand Street Settlement
Hamilton-Madison House
Henry Street Settlement

Lower East Side People's Mutual Housing Association (LESPMHA)
Lower East Side Power Partnership
Nazareth Housing
New York Disaster Interfaith Services (NYDIS)
Occupy Sandy
Operation Hope
Primitive Christian Church
Ryan-NENA Community Health Center
Sara D. Roosevelt Park Community Coalition
Sixth Street Community Center
The Salvation Army
Two Bridges Neighborhood Council (TBNC)
University Settlement
Urban Justice Center – Community Development Project
Village East Towers
WiFi-NY/Peoples Emergency Network
World Cares Center



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hurricane Sandy, which hit New York City on October 29th, devastated many neighborhoods throughout the City. The Lower East Side—which was located in New York City's Emergency Evacuation Zone A when Sandy hit (now referred to as Zone 1) was one of those communities that was particularly hard hit. Tunnels, train stations, and homes were inaccessible and most grocery stores, pharmacies, and other businesses were closed for several days.

The Lower East Side is home to one of the highest concentrations of public housing in the country. These residents were hit especially hard by Sandy, some going without heat, hot water, or use of elevators for weeks. Overall, government response in the immediate aftermath of the storm was slow and inadequate given the immense needs of the Lower East Side. To fill the gap where the government fell short, community organizations had to take matters into their own hands.

The Lower East Side has a long history of coming together as a community and building social bonds and networks. Today the LES has numerous community-based organizations (CBOs) that serve the needs of residents. This robust community infrastructure played a critical role in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. Hours after the storm ended, and well before government agencies or large non-profits such as the Red Cross arrived, these community groups had already started assessing the

needs of residents and distributing lifesaving supplies. Although CBOs were the most effective in meeting the needs of Lower East Side residents quickly and efficiently in the wake of Sandy, they encountered several difficulties in providing relief. CBOs did not have adequate resources or proper training to be relief organizations; they were also not included in the city's emergency management plan and had difficulty communicating with emergency managers and the city relief operations.

Learning from these experiences, community organizations in the Lower East Side formed a Long Term Recovery Group (LTRG), now called "LES Ready," that would cooperatively coordinate our response, resources, preparedness planning, and training in response to Hurricane Sandy and in the event of future disasters. Today, LES Ready is a coalition of 32 community groups and institutions.

As part of LES Ready's mission to coordinate preparedness planning, the group is developing a community-based disaster response plan. To support this plan, Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES), Hester Street Collaborative (HSC), the Community Development Project at the Urban Justice Center (CDP), and LES Ready member organizations conducted community-based research focusing on what worked well in the recovery effort following Sandy, what could be improved, and documenting the resources CBOs in the Lower East Side had in place during Sandy as well as what they currently have in place to respond to future disasters.

METHODOLOGY

RESIDENT SURVEYS: Researchers collected 641 surveys from residents of the Lower East Side from September 2013 through December 2013. The surveys were administered interview-style to respondents and were collected in English, Spanish, and Chinese.

ORGANIZATIONAL SURVEYS: Researchers collected 29 surveys from community-based organizations, tenant associations, and religious institutions based in the Lower East Side about their short and long-term recovery efforts around Hurricane Sandy and their interest in and capacity for providing relief in the event of a future disaster.

FOCUS GROUPS: Researchers conducted eight focus groups with a total of 28 participants in the spring of 2014 to gather qualitative data around LES residents' experience during and after Hurricane Sandy. The focus groups were conducted in English, Spanish, and Chinese at community centers in public housing developments and lasted approximately 60 minutes each.

SECONDARY RESEARCH: Researchers reviewed research and policy reports about the effects of Hurricane Sandy and recovery and rebuilding efforts by New York City government agencies and nongovernmental organizations.

SELECT FINDINGS

(SEE REPORT FOR FULL SET OF FINDINGS)

1. The majority of LES residents did not evacuate before Hurricane Sandy hit and many decided to "shelter in place."

- The lack of damage from Hurricane Irene, the previous year, lulled residents into a false sense of security.
- Of those that did evacuate, most did not utilize City shelters.
 - Only 15% went to a public shelter/evacuation center in NYC;
 - 71% went to friend or family's house in NYC.

"During Hurricane Sandy, that was the first time I ever experienced something like that, from having no power, heat, or hot water to the food going bad. My family and I decided to leave the day after Sandy because we couldn't stand to stay another night..."
- Survey comment

"We heard it [Hurricane Sandy] was coming and we were asked to evacuate but didn't because the news made Sandy look just like Irene in terms of severity levels."
- FG participant

The most useful sources of information were radio and social networks.



45% of respondents got information from a radio



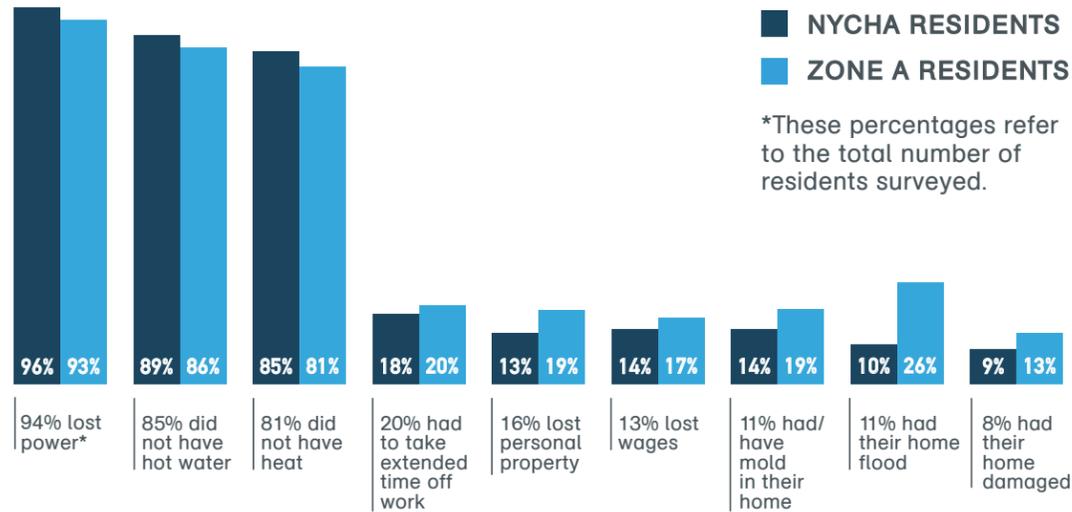
40% from a friend, family, or neighbor



28% from television

2. Residents of the Lower East Side were severely impacted by Hurricane Sandy.

98% of survey respondents report that they were affected by Hurricane Sandy (99% of NYCHA residents, 100% of Zone A residents).



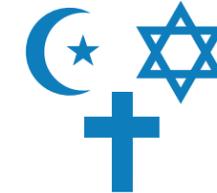
4. Despite the hardships faced by residents, relief was slow and inadequate from the city and federal government. This created a gap that community groups partially filled.

- 62% of survey respondents did NOT receive any relief from the government or other "official" sources.
- And for those that did receive "official" assistance, 53% had to wait four days or more.
- 57% of our survey respondents received assistance from at least one of these community sources.
 - 28% from a family member, friend or neighbor
 - 27% from community organizations
 - 10% from a tenant/resident/block association
 - 9% from religious organizations

5. The inadequate government relief highlighted the importance of strong community bonds and robust community-based organizational infrastructure in the Lower East Side.



28% are members of a community organization



19% are members of a religious institution

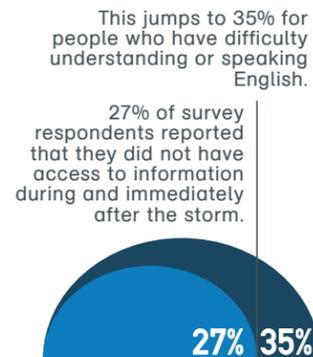


23% are members of a tenant, resident or block association

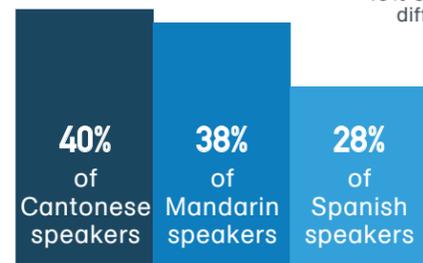


4% are members of the community board
9% are involved in other ways

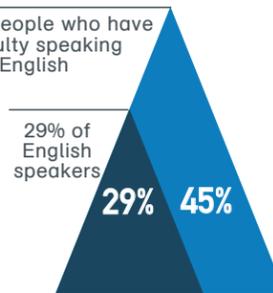
3. Poor communication from the City and a lack of information hampered the recovery effort.



Information access during and immediately after the storm



Did not have access to information in their primary language



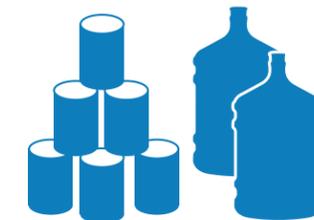
Did not have their needs met

57% of survey respondents are involved in their community. People who are involved in their community are more likely to report that they know a neighbor they can call on immediately if they need help.

Survey respondents also provided assistance to others despite difficulties they were facing.



49% helped neighbors, friends or family



12% donated supplies like food and money



5% volunteered with cleanup and/or rebuilding efforts