



AUDIT AT A GLANCE

Brooklyn Public Library's Emergency Preparedness

What questions did the audit look at?

- Is the Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) adequately prepared to plan for and respond to emergencies to ensure the continuity of its operations and serve the public?

Why does it matter for New Yorkers?

BPL is made up of 60 branch locations across the borough of Brooklyn. Given their established role in the community and borough-wide locations, libraries can provide the public with information and serve as an access point for services during emergencies.

The audit found that BPL served the public in numerous ways during emergencies, by acting as cooling/warming centers during extreme weather, staging areas or command posts during emergencies, and providing resources to asylum seekers and refugees. In addition, QPL has Wi-Fi at all branches and back-up power at certain locations which would allow them to serve as an emergency hub. QPL officials also stated that branches may serve as temporary shelters for displaced individuals.

Certain gaps in preparedness exist related to flood protection, emergency preparedness and business continuity plans and tests, fire drills, and training and communication.

Although BPL implemented flood protection and mitigation measures at certain branches, it did not do so for three branches located within the floodplain—Brighton Beach, Gerritsen Beach, and Sheepshead Bay.

Additionally, BPL lacks a comprehensive emergency plan and did not annually review, update, and test its Business Continuity Plan. This plan has not been reviewed or updated since 2021.

Some branches did not conduct biannual fire drills as required (13.5% in CY2023 and 7.7% in CY2024) and some branches reported that they did not receive active shooter or other emergency trainings and emergency alerts.

Neighborhood libraries are critical resources during emergency situations. These gaps in preparedness threaten BPL's ability to serve when it matters most.

What changes did the agency commit to make following the audit?

- BPL agreed to ensure that facility assessments are conducted ahead of summer cooling and winter heating seasons, consider

AUDIT FINDINGS



BPL branches provided services during emergencies.



BPL did not implement flood protection measures at three branches which are vulnerable to flooding.



BPL lacks a comprehensive emergency plan.



BPL's Business Continuity Plan has not been reviewed or updated since 2021.



7.7% of branches did not conduct biannual fire drills during 2024.



Several branches reported that they did not receive emergency trainings or emergency alerts.



installing generators or other backup power systems at additional branches, and consider installing flood protection and mitigation measures at the three vulnerable branches.

- ▶ BPL agreed to create comprehensive emergency plan.
- ▶ BPL agreed to train all staff on emergency and business continuity plans, regularly test and evaluate those plans, and update them as necessary. BPL also agreed to ensure that biannual drills are conducted at all sites.
- ▶ BPL agreed to implement a centralized notification system to relay information to all branch managers and staff.

Audit Recommendations		Agency Response
1	Ensure facility assessments are conducted at all branches ahead of summer cooling and winter heating seasons to ensure HVAC systems are properly maintained and functioning.	AGREED
2	Consider installing generators or other backup power systems at additional BPL branches to ensure continuity of operations and enable libraries to serve the public during emergencies.	AGREED
3	Consider installing flood protection and mitigation measures at Brighton Beach, Gerritsen Beach, and Sheepshead Bay due to their floodplain location and past storm impacts.	AGREED
4	Create a comprehensive public safety and emergency plan that assigns responsibilities for carrying out specific actions to protect people, property, operations, and the environment in an emergency and provides incident stabilization.	AGREED
5	Train all staff on the comprehensive public safety and emergency plan and Business Continuity Plan, test and evaluate plans at least once per year, and update them as necessary.	AGREED
6	Ensure that biannual drills are conducted for all BPL locations.	AGREED
7	Implement a centralized notification system or platform to quickly relay information to all branch managers and staff, including local emergency updates and BPL instructions related to public health, weather conditions, or security situations.	AGREED

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