



AUDIT AT A GLANCE

New York Public Library's Emergency Preparedness

What questions did the audit look at?

- ▶ Is the New York Public Library (NYPL) 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?

NYPL is made up of 92 locations across Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island. 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 NYPL served the public in numerous ways by acting as cooling/warming centers during extreme weather, staging areas or command posts during emergencies, and providing resources to support asylum seekers. In addition, NYPL may provide Wi-Fi access or serve as temporary shelters during emergencies.

Certain gaps in preparedness exist related to business continuity, disaster recover, and incident response plans and tests, fire drills, other documents that help libraries ensure that they are adequately prepared for emergencies, and emergency alerts. The auditors requested copies of NYPL's Business Continuity, Disaster Recovery, and IT Incident Response Plans and documentation to show that these plans were tested, but NYPL did not provide them citing security risks.

Although all NYPL sites are required to conduct annual fire drills, in 2024, 86% of branches did not do so. Additionally, only eight of 17 (47%) sampled sites submitted their Life Safety/Physical Plant Surveys, Location Security Plan and Checklists, and Internal and External Resource lists. NYPL submitted some but not all documents for seven branches and did not submit any documents for two branches. Also, over 20% of branches reported that the Central Office did not inform them of emergencies in their area. Finally, Aguilar Library—which is located in the 500-year floodplain—has not implemented any flood protection and mitigation measures during renovation.

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

AUDIT FINDINGS



NYPL branches provided services during emergencies.



NYPL's Central Office did not provide auditors with various emergency plans and tests.



86% of branches failed to conduct annual fire drills.



Only 47% of sampled branches submitted all required emergency prep documents.



20% of branches reported that they did not receive emergency alerts.



Aguilar Library is vulnerable to flooding and has not implemented protection or mitigation measures.



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

- ▶ NYPL agreed to work with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency to assess its overall security and resilience.
- ▶ NYPL agreed to test, review, and update its business continuity, cybersecurity, and IT incident response plans on at least an annual basis and ensure that branches are conducting fire drills.
- ▶ NYPL agreed to establish a centralized tracking and reporting system to ensure that all branches are fulfilling their emergency preparedness responsibilities.
- ▶ NYPL agreed to ensure that critical alerts are promptly relayed to all branch managers and staff.
- ▶ NYPL agreed to consider installing flood protection measures at Aquilar Library.

Audit Recommendations		Agency Response
1	Request that the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency conduct an Infrastructure Survey Tool assessment to identify and document NYPL's overall security and resilience. The Infrastructure Survey Tool is a web-based tool designed to assess and record a facility's overall security and resilience.	AGREED
2	Test, review, and update the Business Continuity Plan, Cybersecurity Plan, and IT Incident Response Plan on at least an annual basis.	AGREED
3	Consider implementing mesh Wi-Fi network which supports communications in hard-to-reach areas and can be used in emergency response communications.	DISAGREED
4	Ensure that annual drills are conducted for all NYPL locations.	AGREED
5	Establish a centralized tracking and reporting system to ensure all branches submit their Location Security Plan, Location Security Checklist, Life Safety/Physical Plant Survey, and Internal and External Resources list.	AGREED
6	Ensure that critical emergency alerts from NYCEM, including those related to public health, severe weather, and security events, are promptly relayed to all branch managers and staff.	AGREED
7	Consider installing flood protection and mitigation measures at Aquilar Library due to its floodplain location.	AGREED

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