



AUDIT AT A GLANCE

Queens Public Library's Emergency Preparedness

What questions did the audit look at?

- ▶ Is the Queens Public Library (QPL) adequately prepared to plan for and respond to emergencies?

Why does it matter for New Yorkers?

QPL is made up of 66 branch locations across the borough of Queens. In addition to serving as community gathering places, they act as cooling/warming centers during extreme weather, provide Wi-Fi access, and have provided essential resources and programming to asylum seekers and refugees.

The audit found that QPL serves the public in numerous ways during emergencies, though certain gaps in preparedness do exist, including flood mitigation efforts and fire drill compliance, as well as issues with planning, training, and communication.

QPL implemented flood mitigation measures at two of three vulnerable branches (Arverne and Hunters Point), but QPL did not provide documentation that it did so at the third branch (Seaside). Although QPL had a Disaster Recovery Plan, it could be improved by formally mandating annual tests, reviews, and updates. Similarly, QPL did not provide documentation showing that all branches conducted biannual fire drills, as required by its Emergency Evacuation Plan. Finally, the audit found potential problems with QPL's communication and training: several branches responded to a survey and said that they did not receive active shooter and other emergency preparedness training, while others stated that they did not receive emergency alerts from the Central Office.

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

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

- ▶ QPL agreed to consider installing flood mitigation measures at Seaside branch, as well as backup generators at other branches.
- ▶ QPL agreed to enhance its Disaster Recovery Plan.
- ▶ QPL agreed to implement a centralized notification system to relay information to all branch managers and staff.

AUDIT FINDINGS



QPL branches effectively provided services during emergencies.



One QPL branch is vulnerable to flooding.



QPL did not document whether branches conducted biannual fire drills.



Several branches did not receive required training or emergency alerts.



Audit Recommendations		Agency Response
1	Consider installing flood protection and mitigation measures at Seaside due to its floodplain location.	AGREED
2	Consider installing generators or other backup power systems in additional QPL branches to ensure continuity of operations and enable libraries to serve the public during emergencies.	AGREED
3	Request that the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) conduct an Infrastructure Survey Tool assessment to identify and document QPL's overall security and resilience. The Infrastructure Survey Tool (IST) is an optional, web-based tool designed to assess and record a facility's overall security and resilience.	DID NOT ADDRESS ¹
4	Ensure the Disaster Recovery Plan includes a requirement to test, review, and update the Plan at least annually.	AGREED
5	Address areas of improvement noted in Disaster Recovery Test Reports.	PARTIALLY AGREED ²
6	Ensure that biannual drills are conducted for all QPL branches and implement a centralized process for maintaining documentation for each completed drill.	AGREED
7	Implement a centralized notification system or platform to quickly relay information to all branch managers and staff, including local emergency updates and QPL instructions related to public health, weather conditions, or security situations	AGREED

¹ QPL did not address this recommendation instead indicating that the Library already conducts its own independent cybersecurity assessment on a periodic basis using vendors certified in cybersecurity protocols. QPL also indicated it would welcome OTI's participation in additional cybersecurity testing.

² QPL partially agreed with this recommendation, stating that it will address areas for improvement detected in a Disaster Recovery Test, but did not commit to addressing all identified issues. QPL indicated it was not feasible to make improvements in all instances.