

Podcast # 1924

Emergency Preparedness with Erie County's Frank Cammarata

Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1

Welcome to Independent Perspective, a public affairs presentation of Western New York Independent Living.

00:00:05 Speaker 1

I'm your host, Tracy LeBlanc, Chief Community Engagement Officer at Western New York Independent Living.

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September is National Preparedness Month.

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The month focuses on what your family should do to be ready for an emergency.

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Having a plan and being prepared is especially important for people with disabilities.

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Joining us today to offer advice on being prepared should an emergency arise is Frank Cammarata, Director of the Erie County Office

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for People with Disabilities.

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Welcome to the program, Frank.

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Thank you, Tracy.

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Always a pleasure to be working with you.

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Can you provide us with an overview of what your office does and how it serves the community?

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I sure can, but before I do that, I'm gonna say to you, we celebrate September as Emergency Preparedness Month, but we need to make sure that we are preparing all year long because emergencies are happening all year long.

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So, Erie County is actually one of only five counties in New York State that provides an advocacy office for people with disabilities,

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to ensure that the county services that are being provided are accessible, inclusive, and making sure that people with disabilities are focused upon.

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Great.

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Let's talk about emergency preparedness.

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Why is it important for people with disabilities to have a plan for emergency situations?

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A number of the reasons are, it's difficult to know the scope of the event that is potentially happening.

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It's difficult to know potentially when or where an event may be happening.

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It's difficult to know when or it's difficult to know the longevity of an event.

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You know, we have so many potential events that we need to think about.

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The other thing is that we're working with Western New York Independent Living on this, people with disabilities.

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People have different disabilities and they need to plan differently for their specific needs.

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You know, people with physical disabilities, people who use mobility devices, people who are blind and visually impaired, people who are deaf and hard of hearing, they all have very different

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important needs during an event.

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So, you know, that's that's that's really just scratching the surface here.

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What should an emergency preparedness plan include?

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Really, it's, you know, starting with you want to start with a personal support network, creating a phone tree, making sure that, you know, you have you're dialed into to friends, neighbors, loved ones,

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and making sure that they're dialed into you.

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Also knowing, really knowing reliable resources that are available.

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The plan should also, we should talk about if you should leave your home, leave your office space, or should you stay at home and shelter in place?

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All of this is determined on, the information that you are being provided.

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So, you need to make sure that you're getting good information.

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Another piece specifically for people with disabilities is service animal considerations.

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If you're staying at home, you generally will have supplies for your service animal.

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But if you go to a shelter, if your animal has a specific diet, you need to have that specific food.

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And then we talk about, you know, part of your plan should include

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all the different types of emergency preparedness kits that you could or should have.

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And I wanna say should have.

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Do you have an emergency preparedness kit at your office, in your desk?

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Are you prepared at home?

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Do you have a kit in your car?

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Do you have a to-go kit on your wheelchair?

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We used to say three days is a good amount of time.

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We're now saying seven days.

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You need to be prepared to be on your own, independent for at least seven days.

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Do you have any resources you can recommend for someone who is looking for more information on

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emergency preparedness plan.

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Sure, there's a lot of really terrific resources.

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I should say the ADA National Network, they put out a list of emergency preparedness supplies.

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Erie.gov, Erie County Office for People with Disabilities, as well as our Erie County Department of Health and Health Equity, as well as our Office for Emergency Preparedness, New York State Office for Emergency Management.

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We have our storm phone line here in Erie County as well.

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It is 716-858-7669. Another great resource

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is the United Way, 211, and the American Red Cross.

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So, I'm hoping that people reach out to those resources.

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And again, not just now,

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but all the time throughout the year.

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And as you prepare your emergency preparedness kits, review those preparedness kits.

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We have to make sure that we're replacing the things that we use throughout the year.

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Great.

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Well, that's all the time we have for this week.

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You've been listening to Independent Perspective, a public affairs presentation of Western New York Independent Living.

00:05:00 Speaker 1

Our guest today was Frank Cammarata, Director of Erie County's Office for People with Disabilities.

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And I have been your host, Tracy LeBlanc.