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## LESSON LEARNED

#### PRIMARY DISCIPLINES

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- Emergency Management

## Continuity of Operations: Strengthening Communications with Businesses

### SUMMARY

Private sector employers need detailed, credible information in order to make informed decisions during a crisis. Emergency managers should seek to provide employers with up-to-date information through email, phone trees, and inclusion in an emergency operations center.

### DESCRIPTION

When New York City lost power on August 14, 2003, businesses in New York City had to make operational decisions based on incomplete information from the broadcast news, radio, and other unofficial sources. The broadcasts often contained dated information and lacked important details necessary for employers to make appropriate decisions. As a result, many companies were unsure how to respond to the crisis, including whether to send employees home or require them to come in on August 15<sup>th</sup>.

According to the New York City Emergency Preparedness Task Force, New York City should seek to provide credible, detailed reports directly to critical industry sectors. The Task Force also recommended that the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) include seats in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for private sector representatives. These representatives could come from major trade associations such as the Real Estate Board of New York and the Partnership for New York City. In order to reach the more than 200,000 small businesses in New York, the Task Force recommended that OEM create a small business outreach tree utilizing existing Business Improvement Districts.

OEM has since launched multiple initiatives to improve communication with the private sector. Among them, the CorpNet information system provides members of the New York business community with real-time information about disasters and response efforts. This information is published through email, pagers, and other means. OEM also currently reserves 6-7 seats in its EOC for representatives of the private sector.

### CITATION

New York City Emergency Response Task Force. *Enhancing New York City's Emergency Preparedness*. October 28, 2003.  
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