



# Special Needs Advance Warning System Plan

## *What is the Special Needs Advance Warning System Plan?*

Individuals with special needs are often the most vulnerable residents during emergencies and the most difficult to reach through public information and community outreach. In New York City, the Advance Warning System (AWS) reaches this population through the governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations that work closely with them as clients. Emergency communication to people with special needs is more effective when done through their service providers. Through AWS, OEM pushes targeted information to individuals with special needs during emergencies and supports preparedness initiatives. These agencies have developed trusted relationships with their clients and can tailor communication and support to their client's specific needs, empowering the client to act in a way that is most appropriate for them.

## *What does the plan contain?*

OEM uses the following tools in the Special Needs Advance Warning System Plan to get targeted emergency information to individuals with special needs:

<b>E-mail Messages</b>	<p>Messages are sent to all registered agencies, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information about a current or pending emergency, such as hazardous weather, utility disruption, transportation disruption, public health emergency, or an event requiring evacuation.</li><li>• Pre-season or pre-incident preparedness tips for hurricanes, summer heat and winter storms.</li><li>• Information on services and assistance available to populations with special needs during periods of recovery.</li></ul>
<b>Conference Calls</b>	<p>OEM and pre-identified umbrella service agencies communicate via conference calls before and during emergencies. Discussions of emergency information, plan activations, outreach efforts and resource needs are included.</p>
<b>AWS Website</b>	<p>A dedicated website (<a href="http://advancewarningsystemnyc.org">advancewarningsystemnyc.org</a>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Manages AWS e-mail messages and conference calls.</li><li>• Supports agencies with detailed emergency information, reference materials and planning tools.</li><li>• Surveys agencies and their clients on preparedness and outreach needs to inform planning and response efforts.</li></ul>

## *When does the plan get activated?*

AWS is typically activated simultaneously with other citywide emergency response plans. However, it may be activated any time an incident requires dissemination of information to individuals with special needs.

## *Who can join AWS?*

Every New York City agency that provides services to people with special needs is encouraged to join AWS. Broad and active agency membership in AWS enhances OEM's ability to reach individuals with special needs.

## *How do agencies use AWS?*

Participating agencies can use AWS information to support their own internal continuity of operations plans and share information with their clients about emergency situations, affected services and alternatives. When possible, agencies can assist their vulnerable clients in emergency planning and help them with recovery.

## *How do I join AWS?*

Any New York City agency that works with people with special needs can receive AWS e-mail messages and access its website. To sign up, contact Aaron Belisle by emailing [abelisle@oem.nyc.gov](mailto:abelisle@oem.nyc.gov) with your agency's name, address, a primary point of contact (name and title) and the contact's email address and phone number.