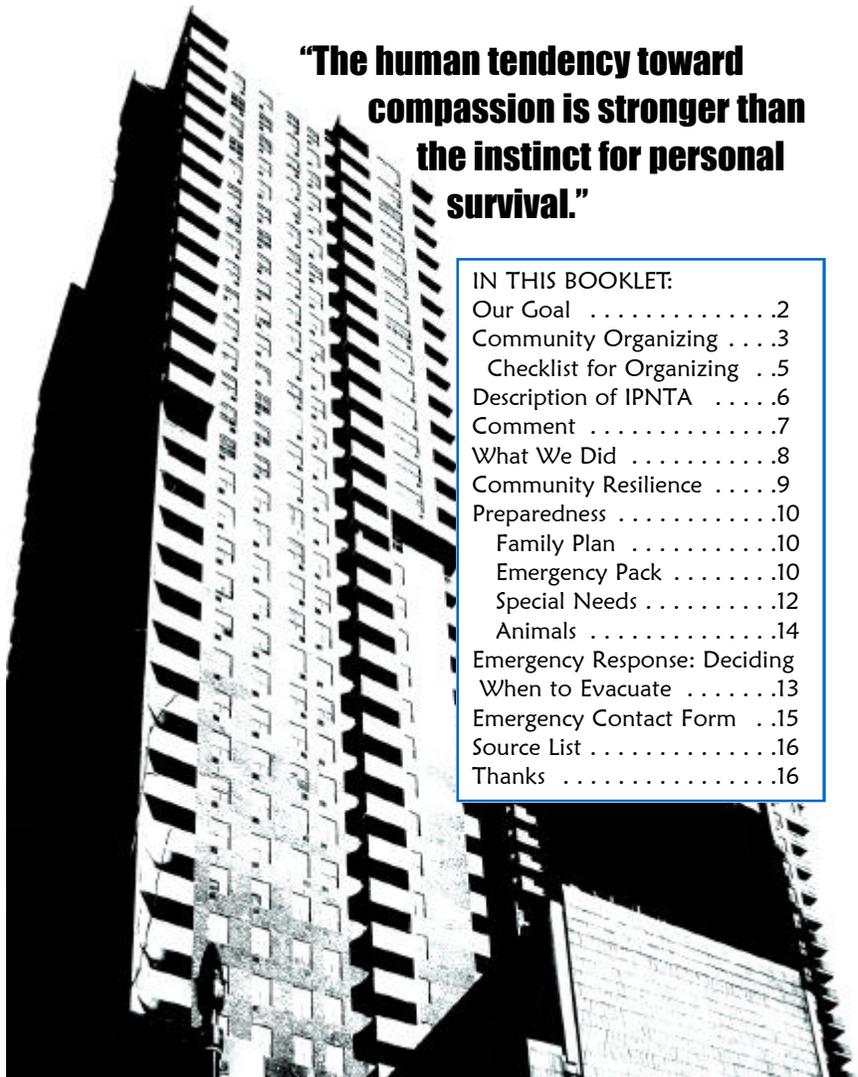

Neighbor to Neighbor: The Downtown Solution

IPNTA's Guide to Community Healing

**“The human tendency toward
compassion is stronger than
the instinct for personal
survival.”**

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THE GOAL OF “NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR”

September 11th 2001 has changed our lives both as individuals and as communities — particularly for those who call Lower Manhattan home. While we hope there will never be an event like 9-11 again, unthinkable things do happen and we must be prepared.

Independence Plaza North is only a few blocks away from the World Trade Center site. On that day we rapidly mobilized ourselves to face enormous challenges. Now we want to share what we learned with our Downtown neighbors.

Though we did reach out to area neighbors who came for help, many were struggling alone. This can change. At Independence Plaza North, we were fortunate to have a strong Tenant Association structure that allowed us to organize immediately and help those who had special needs during the emergency. It took one terrorist attack to teach us that our community is the key to survival, especially when outside help is not forthcoming.



What we learned first hand, which was later verified by researchers, is that in times of difficulty, people naturally want to help others. Effective preparation and organization maximizes the benefits of this generous spirit. Neighborhood organizations save lives, shelter people, and become the center for healing. Being isolated can be dangerous. At the very least, isolation adds more stress to an already traumatizing experience.

Community is the key, even long after difficult events have passed. Block parties, residents’ meetings, kids’ play dates — these not only help develop a strong sense of neighborhood for potential crises, they enhance our everyday quality of life.

This brief pamphlet provides an easy guide toward the process, suggesting how to start, and where to find additional resources. And in it we share stories of our own experiences.

Neighbor to Neighbor combines two main themes: inspiring residents to organize their buildings, streets and immediate neighborhoods, and emergency preparedness.

Behind each is the shared goal of community resilience. We hope Neighbor to Neighbor: The Downtown Solution is a useful contribution to the neighborhoods that make Lower Manhattan so unique, and so great.



COMMUNITY ORGANIZING – How To Start

In lower Manhattan, many residents are not yet organized with their neighbors. This can be remedied with a little creativity and some organizational sense.

It only takes one or two people to start the ball rolling. Some of you might already have co-op or condo boards. This is a great start. For those of you who do have an organization, you should consider having one person — or more — start an emergency action committee. The committee should identify who:

- has young children
- needs life supporting medication
- are disabled
- are seniors
- could help in an emergency (identify skills and professions, i.e., doctors/nurses, architects, social workers, therapists)

This need not be invasion of privacy. On page 15 we present a sample form that can be distributed to residents, who should be asked to fill in the information. The need for this information is not speculative. We have already seen what happens when everyone is on their own.

If each tenant has the email and phone number of a committee leader, it will be easier to keep in contact if evacuation is necessary. It's difficult to

know when it will be possible to return home if no one is in charge — someone must take responsibility to get information for the rest of the neighbors.



"My cell phone number was mysteriously distributed as a Tribeca emergency number and I became the contact person for area residents who did not have tenant associations."

If you discover there aren't enough people in your building who are interested yet, expand out to a block association. And if there are very few people on your block — pick a range of streets or an area — and create a neighborhood association.

Talk to some of your neighbors about it. See who is willing to at least help it get started. The person who eventually heads up the group, and an assistant, should be selected by ability — to keep a clear head and make good choices especially in an emergency. The person doesn't have to operate alone, but it's important to have one or two selected leaders who will serve as coordinators of the group. (President, Vice President, Co-captain, you decide.)

At Independence Plaza our leadership motto is: "Focus on the goal and leave the personal agendas at home." In other words, the person who leads the group must keep the Group's well-being as the most important motivating factor.

Johns Hopkins University's Center for Civilian Biodefense invited a representative of the Independence Plaza North Tenant Association to share our experience of 9/11/01, and the ten-day aftermath, at a seminar held in Washington DC last November.

The Center felt that IPN's response exemplified the positive ability and resilience of an American Community in an impossible situation. The audience was comprised of medical organizations, government & volunteer emergency responders, members of the Center for Disease Control, etc. Days later we received emails that five groups were already organizing around the country as a direct result of IPN's presentation.

"September 11th and the Role of the Neighborhood Association" is available on the IPNTA web site:

http://ipnta.org/downloads/biodefense_quarter4_4.pdf



Checklist for Organizing Your Group

- Exchange phone numbers/emails to discuss organizing with a few people
- Pick a date for a meeting and a convenient meeting location (someone's apartment, a local diner.)
- Type up a memo to distribute to your neighbors inviting them to come.
- Have an intermediate leader host the meeting and discussion
- Pass around an attendance sheet for names, addresses, phone numbers, email
- Call people who came and talk more with them — find out who would like to participate in a leadership capacity.
- If a lot of people are involved, you can have an election for officers. If few come, appoint each other until you grow. (Somebody has to take charge!)
- Start creating the emergency response form for each neighbor to fill out and give a place to return. (Use the form in this pamphlet as a guide.)
- Organize your information. Decide whether to charge membership or accept donations for printing, etc.
- Create a newsletter or monthly memo to keep people informed and ask for input.
- Since 9/11, IPNTA has worked with other organizations, such as the WTC Residents Coalition, set up an art therapy group, has begun organizing a computer center for residents, and is involved in numerous other activities.

Identify Skills and Talents. A psychologist living in IPN, with Red Cross experience, organized a trauma drop-in center on September 12 — tenants came immediately, especially those with children.

We met a very distraught couple with a baby. They lived further East and were alone in their building. After sharing food and water, we invited them to the center. A few Red Cross volunteers came to help for about a week and they were later replaced by other tenants with trauma therapy skills.

More resources for organizing ►►►



More Resources and Help for Organizing

Remember to “take heart”. Dr. Carl Bell, a Chicago psychiatrist, defines heart as, “the characteristic that causes a person to be firm in his or her beliefs and to have the determination to accomplish goals. Examples of heart can be found in many accounts of people who have overcome hardships and become successful.” (Bell, 1998).

It's not always easy to be the first one to organize — so the support of another group can help tremendously. A helpful organization is: Citizens Committee for New York, Tel: 212-989-0909 (see “Resources” page for address).

You may be on your own when you start the ball rolling, but we believe you won't be alone for long.

Many great downtown advocacy groups cropped up immediately. They have done fantastic work on behalf of lower Manhattan. Even as early as 9/12/01 plans for recovery were being discussed in pockets of the neighborhood. The 911 Environmental Action Committee and the WTC Residents Coalition were formed. Community Board members began planning a group to help downtown businesses get back on their feet. These are just three of the many wonderful groups. Community organization IS the solution for bouncing back!



The Independence Plaza North Tenants Association (IPNTA) represents the tenants of Independence Plaza North, a housing complex on Greenwich Street consisting of three 39-story buildings connected by plazas and townhouses. The complex houses thousands of residents. It was built in the early 1970s, before "Tribeca" as such existed. Its ethnically and economically diverse inhabitants have helped to transform Tribeca from a formerly bleak, commercial and industrial area, into a thriving neighborhood.

Comment

The literature and research in the trauma field has shown that people and communities are remarkably resilient in the face of disaster, and that with proper social support they find their resources for coping and healing after such events.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, it has become clear that some of the most significant efforts toward recovery in New York City were made by small ad hoc groups of volunteers and grass-root organizations that came together to respond to the needs that they knew best in their families, neighborhoods, schools, and communities.

This was often done with very little or no financial support, and sometimes the added challenge of having to surmount difficult institutional barriers.

The efforts of the Independence Plaza North Tenants Association exemplify what we know to be a crucial component of effective disaster response and preparedness – community involvement.

Jack Saul, Ph.D.
Executive Director
International Trauma Studies Program NYU
Downtown Community Resource Center NYC
www.communityresilience.org/nyc/

"On 9/11 we witnessed the worst of humanity, and yet, we also witnessed the best of humanity. People came to help with whatever had to be done. Their acts of ocmpassion were also self-rewarding. It's amazing to see how human beings set aside many petty issues during an emergency and focus on how to make things better."

What We Did ►►►

 **WHAT WE DID**

On 9/11/01 and the ten days following, IPN was faced with an enormous task. We are a large building complex. The Tenant Association command structure immediately went into action. Luckily our building manager was on site — helping us admirably to navigate the crisis.



The skeleton maintenance staff struggled to operate the building, signs with important announcements were printed in the management office. It was teamwork par excellence. Board members set up posts in the lobbies using the intercom system. Floor captains knew they were part of the team.



Countless others came to help. (It is important to note that people are going to volunteer, so be ready for them.) A dedicated tenant managed to get 90 meals twice a day for people who could not fend for themselves, and team members delivered the food. Even our youngest tenants helped out. We finally were able to obtain water, medicine, and trauma support for whoever needed it and to assist disabled tenants whose home care attendants were not allowed to enter the area.



"Since our building was evacuated, we didn't know where most people went. I was able to contact many Tenant Association floor captains by email. It was a way to spread news and let people know when they could return to their apartments."

Several tenants needed emergency hospital care and we were able to coordinate with Red Cross. 310 Greenwich lost all power and was evacuated. Many tenants took their neighbors (even those they didn't know) into their own apartments. Other tenants visited those who went to the shelters. Some tenants cooked for their entire floor, people knocked on doors asking elderly or disabled what they could do to help. Without tenant support it would have been impossible to meet so many challenges.



When the evacuated neighbors returned, they immediately joined the ranks. We were fortunate that with all of the struggles, not one tenant was lost. We credit our success to many things — but a key fact was that we were organized as a strong Tenant Association BEFORE the attack.

 **COMMUNITY RESILIENCE**

Community resilience can be defined as the ability of communities to withstand ruptures and to pull through, often with greater strength. Community resilience following a traumatic event usually encompasses the following four themes¹:

- Building community and enhancing social connectedness as a foundation for recovery. Community recovery begins with the reweaving of social connections that have been disrupted by traumatic events.... This includes strengthening the system of social support, coalition building, and information and resource sharing.²
- Collectively telling the story of the community's experience and response. An important part of the communal healing process is about having one's story validated and a part of the collective story that emerges after a complex and horrible tragedy.
- Re-establishing the rhythms and routines of life and engaging in collective healing rituals. The spontaneous neighborhood vigils, anniversary rituals, and community events marking seasonal changes and holidays become important times for communities to reconnect....³
- Arriving at a positive vision of the future with renewed hope.... Many of the collective responses to 9/11 were attempts to reestablish hope in the future. One of the most important questions faced by communities after a catastrophe is, "how do we move from haunting memories of the tragedy to a vision of the future that incorporates the new realities that we are facing?"

[1] Jack Saul, Promoting Community Recovery in Downtown Manhattan, American Family Therapy Academy Annual Conference, June 2002.

[2] Judith Landau, Terror and Trauma: Enhancing Family and Community Connectedness to Access Resilience for Dealing with Trauma, American Family Therapy Academy Annual Conference, June, 2002.

[3] Mindy Fullilove, Summary of Conference, Together We Heal: Community Mobilization for Trauma Recovery, April, 2002.

 **PREPAREDNESS**

A purpose in discussing preparation is to help overcome our fear or denial. A goal of terrorism is to keep us constantly afraid and on-guard. However, being “prepared” is a positive antidote.

Make A Family Plan

Make your plan, and give to all appropriate family members, friends, or other contacts.



1. Pick an Out-of-State Contact. It may be easier for separated family members and friends to call or email out-of-state than locally. (As we learned, it was easier to call California than midtown Manhattan.) Everyone should contact that person to tell him or her where they are.

2. Plan Meeting Places. Pick two locations: one in your neighborhood, one outside the neighborhood in case you can't get home. Everyone should know the address and phone number.

Information Sources:
FEMA (Ready.gov) – http://www.ready.gov/make_a_plan.html
Red Cross – <http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/familyplan.html>

Make an Emergency Pack

Prepare an Emergency Pack in case you have to evacuate. Red Cross and FEMA recommend the following items if you have to evacuate.

The "Short List" – if you have only moments before leaving, keep these items in an immediately handy place:



- Medical supplies: prescription medications and dentures.
- Disaster supplies: flashlight, batteries, radio, first aid kit, bottled water
- Clothing and bedding: a change of clothes and a sleeping bag or bedroll and pillow for each household member
- Car keys and keys to the place you may be going, e.g., a friend's or relative's home. (Don't count on being able to use your car however.)

Ideally, you want to have these items ready:

- Flashlights with plenty of extra batteries
- Battery-powered radio with extra batteries
- Phone that plugs directly into the wall jack (not electric or cordless)
- Battery-operated lamps/lights (safer than candles)
- Candles – if using, they should be encased in glass holders (no open candles)
- First aid kit
- Prescription medications in the original bottle, copies of prescriptions
- Eyeglasses (with a copy of the prescription)
 - How many of us left without our eyeglasses?
 - Water (at least five gallons per person is recommended)
 - Foods that do not require refrigeration or cooking
- Items that infants and elderly household members may require
- Medical equipment, such as dentures, crutches, prostheses, etc.
- Change of clothes for each household member
- Sleeping bag or bedroll and pillow for each household member
- Checkbook, cash, and credit cards
- Map of the area

Keep your important papers together, and know where they are. And, it's a good idea to always carry with you proof of residence. Important papers to take:

- Driver's license or personal identification; Social Security card
- Proof of residence (deed or lease)
- Insurance policies; Birth and marriage certificates
- Stocks, bonds, and other negotiable certificates
- Wills, deeds, and copies of recent tax returns

Information Sources:

Red Cross – <http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/evacuation.html>

Family Disaster Supplies Kit (stock number A4463)

Your Family Disaster Plan (A4466)

Before Disaster Strikes: How to Make Sure You're Financially Prepared (A5075)

Ready.gov (FEMA) – http://www.ready.gov/make_a_kit.html

Special needs ►►►

 **People With Special Needs**

For people with special needs, these sources provide detailed information on how to prepare. The Red Cross recommends establishing a personal network – individuals who will check with you in an emergency and give if assistance if needed.

Seven Important Items to Discuss, Give to and Practice with Your Personal Support Network:

1. Make arrangements, prior to an emergency, for your support network to immediately check on you after a disaster and, if needed, offer assistance.
2. Exchange important keys.
3. Show where you keep emergency supplies.
4. Share copies of your relevant emergency documents, evacuation plans and emergency health information card.
5. Agree and practice a communications system regarding how to contact each other in an emergency.
6. You and your personal support network should always notify each other when you are going out of town and when you will return.
7. The relationship should be mutual. Learn about each other's needs and how to help each other in an emergency.

- Disaster Preparedness for Seniors by Seniors
<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/seniors.html>
- Tips for People with Special Needs & Concerns
<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/mobileprogs.html>
- Disaster Preparedness for People with Disabilities
<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/disability.html>

The "A" List. The building manager provided us with a list of senior citizens and disabled residents in each building. This became our "A-List" — the people we'd check on first. Everyone talked to their neighbors to make sure these people were ok.

"Tenants Ran The Drugstore"

Residents' prescription and other medical needs became a serious issue. Stores were closed. Mail delivery was suspended. Non-residents could not enter the area and people weren't allowed to return if they left.

Our City Council Representative at the time 'smuggled' the owner of our area drug store into the neighborhood. Tenants volunteered to run the cash register and manage the store as he filled residents' prescriptions. Some of our board members delivered the prescriptions to those unable to leave their apartments.

It was amazing teamwork that allowed him to stay open and we were grateful that there was a source for what was life-sustaining medication for many people."



EMERGENCY RESPONSE: Deciding When to Evacuate Your Apartment

Depending on the circumstances, the first decision is whether to stay or go. If it is not possible to get information from authorities or news, we need to use common sense and whatever information is available. If you have any doubts, stay where you are.

Staying In. In the event of hazardous materials being released into the air, whether accidentally or intentionally, we may need to "Shelter-in-Place." This does not mean going to a shelter, but rather, that it may be temporarily safer to stay indoors. If you see large amounts of debris in the air, or if authorities say the air is badly contaminated, you may want to stay inside.

To "Shelter-in-Place", Ready.gov recommends the following:

- Bring your family and pets inside
- Lock doors, close windows, air vents and fireplace dampers
- Turn off fans, air conditioning and forced air heating systems
- Take your emergency supply kit unless you have reason to believe it has been contaminated
- Go into an interior room with few windows, if possible
- Seal all windows, doors and air vents with plastic sheeting and duct tape. Consider measuring and cutting the sheeting in advance to save time
- Be prepared to improvise and use what you have on hand to seal

gaps so that you create a barrier between yourself and any contamination

- Local authorities may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, you should watch TV, listen to the radio or check the Internet often for official news and instructions as they become available.



FEMA – "Deciding to Stay or Go"
http://www.ready.gov/stay_or_go.html
Red Cross – "Shelter-in-Place in an Emergency":
<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/shelterinplace.html>

Essentials for Animals

- Give a set of keys to someone in the neighborhood
- Place "animal alert" sticker on your door with your contact number(s)
- Appropriate equipment for transport
- Two-week supply of medication(s), up to date medical records
- Two-week supply of wet and dry food and plastic containers of water.
- First aid kit, Blankets and towels
- List of pet-friendly hotels, boarding facilities and veterinarians

DOGS: Extra leash or rope, Muzzle.

CATS: In lieu of carrier, use pillowcase or recycling bin punched with holes. Litter pans or aluminum baking dishes. Litter/newspapers, scoop.

RABBITS: Transport same as cats.

BIRDS: Transport in travel cage or carrier. Blanket for cold weather, plant mister for warm. Leg bands for I.D.

SMALL ANIMALS: (e.g. hamsters, gerbils, mice, rats, guinea pigs) Transport in carrier or small container with punched holes. Bedding materials

FISH: If you're home when disaster strikes, secure fish tanks on low stands or tables

REPTILES/AMPHIBIANS: Snakes can be transported in a pillowcase.

Transport lizards like birds.

Food: Large water bowl, Heat source, if necessary, Evacuation plan for live food, Dechlorinator drops

If you must leave the animals behind:

Hang signs on windows and doors that state what kind and how many animals you left behind, where they hide, your contact information.

Leave lots of water and dry food.

Animals should not be tied up or caged.

Detailed information and article sources will be available on <http://ipnta.org>.

Sample Emergency Contact Information Form

This form can be adapted as necessary for your building or organization.

Please print clearly. If you need more room, write on additional paper and attach.

1. Building _____ Apt: _____ Townhouse _____
 2. Full names in your home. Check and/or complete appropriate boxes.

Do you have car or van to help? _____

NAME	CHILD	SENIOR	SPECIAL NEEDS	PHONE (H)	PHONE (W)	CELL	EMAIL

3. Emergency numbers of close friend or relative inside & outside of [your building]

NAME	PHONE(S)	ADDRESS/EMAIL	WILL THEY CARE FOR YOUR PETS?	DO THEY HAVE YOUR KEYS?	PET MINDER (IF NONE OF PRECEDING)

4. Special Needs: (List doctors for all family members. If no special health condition, write "none")

NAME	CRITICAL MEDICATIONS	HEALTH CONDITION	DOCTOR'S NAME	PHONE(S)

5. Home/Child care attendants. Crucial! List names and phones of Attendant and/or agency.

Children	Adults

Volunteers: We would like to identify tenants who would assist in emergencies, and their skills and abilities. Non-medical skills are also important for this list.

Medical/Health: _____

Red Cross-trained: _____

Any skill, ability, or career (even an electrician or engineer can be important): _____

—————→ **Stay in touch with us at IPNTA** ←————

Drop us a line to let us know that your new group exists. We are keeping a list of all neighborhood organizations and will share it as a networking tool for lower Manhattan. Or, if after your efforts, you are not able to organize and would like additional help or information, we will brainstorm with you. Email us at: info@ipnta.org.

RESOURCES

Note: web site addresses do change, and were current as of printing.

Citizens Committee for NY
305 7th Ave, 15th Flr, 10001
Tel: 212-989-0909
<http://www.citizensnyc.org>

Metropolitan Council on Housing
339 Lafayette St, #301, 10012
Tel: 212-979-0611

Community Board #1
49-51 Chambers Street, 10007
212-442-5050
<http://www.cb1.org/>

WTC Residents Coalition
212-945-2106, s_jain@ix.netcom.com

911 Environmental Action Committee
<http://www.911ea.org/>

Tribeca Organization
205 Hudson St, 10013
212-966-0063
<http://www.tribeca.org/>

American Red Cross Greater NY
150 Amsterdam Ave, 10023
Phone: 212-787-1000
Fax: 212-875-2309
<http://www.nyredcross.org>

Ready.gov (FEMA)
1-800-BE-READY.
TTY# 1-800-464-6161
<http://www.ready.gov>

Downtown Resource Center of NYC
<http://communityresilience.org/nyc/>

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<http://www.bowne.com>

NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Kelly Ryan, MA, MPH, Director
Mental Health Disaster Planning

Downtown Resource Center
Thoughtful insights on the importance of community.
Downtown Resource Center is a program of Project Liberty and NYU Center for Catastrophe Preparedness and Response
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