



CHOOSE YOUR OWN PATH TO
PREPAREDNESS



Story Presentation to Groups

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CHOOSE YOUR OWN PATH TO PREPAREDNESS



30 minutes

DURATION: Approximately 30 minutes, maximum, depending on amount of audience interaction and presenter preparedness.

PROPS:

CERT green vest

Poster-size book cover for "Sharks in the Crosswalk"

Poster-size Emergency Reference Card

Poster that describes the contents of an Emergency Supply Kit

Example of a Go Bag

Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down Sign

In advance, the presenter should find volunteers from the audience with the help of adult coordinators/teachers/supervisors who can hold up the props for this presentation.



2 to 4 minutes

INTRODUCTION

Hello, everyone. It's great to have you all gathered here today. I'm excited to get the chance to introduce you to a character from one of our new Choose Your Own Path to Preparedness Story Books that you've received today.

The characters in these stories are kids just like you. What's interesting about them is that they all have to make some important decisions.

My name is _____ and I am a _____ with the New York City Office of Emergency Management.

Before I introduce you to that kid I mentioned, let me tell you a little about the Office of Emergency Management—or OEM as we call it. OEM is responsible for a lot of things that help keep New Yorkers safe. One of the things they do is plan for just about any kind of emergency that could happen in our city.

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Emergencies come in lots of different forms, everything from weather events—like hurricanes, blizzards, heat waves—to disasters—like fires, terrorist attacks, or water main breaks.

The people at OEM are specialists. They live and breathe emergency preparedness.

The cool thing is they are very dedicated people, from the OEM staff right down to the people who do the hardest work; first responders, EMTs, police officers, and fire fighters, watch commanders, and others.

Some of the most important people I work with are members of Community Emergency Response Teams. We know them as CERT members—C, E, R, T. They're trained in basic emergency response skills. This includes fire safety, basic search and rescue, disaster medical operations, and traffic control. CERT teams support local communities and neighborhoods. They're available to assist with emergency education. And they are often among the very first to respond to local emergencies.

[Hold up green CERT vest].

This is how you identify a Community Emergency Response Team member—the CERT green vest. Have you ever seen someone wearing one of these? Raise your hand if you have.



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[Optional: Call on volunteers to briefly explain what the circumstances were when they saw CERT volunteers.]

If you see someone wearing one of these vests during an emergency in the city, that's a good thing. It means there are responsible people on the scene to help you. If you have questions or need help in an emergency, look for the green vest. CERT members can help you make smart decisions in emergencies.

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1 to 2 minutes

DECISION MAKING

Teaching people to make the right decisions in an emergency gets to the heart of what OEM does.

Each day you are faced with making thousands of decisions, most of them very small ones. Think of the decisions you had to make just coming here today. You had to decide whether you would get up and out of bed when your alarm went off this morning. Or did you decide to hit the snooze button and sleep just a little bit longer?

Then you had to decide what to wear, what music to play on your MP3 player while you were eating breakfast, when to leave the house, what to bring to school, what to leave at home. And that's just in the first few minutes of your day.

In the event of an emergency in our city, there will be plenty of decisions for everyone to make. And that includes you.

You're at the age where you are becoming more and more responsible for yourself, and you might even find that sometimes you are responsible for other people as well.

You may have a brother or sister who counts on you. Or you may have a friend or grandparent who counts on you. In an emergency, the decisions you make impact not just you, but lots of other people too.

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3 to 5 minutes

INTRODUCE "SHARKS IN THE CROSSWALK"

If you'd like an example of the importance of good decision making, let me introduce you to someone I think you'll really like. His name is Ben.

Ben is someone you may already know. He likes basketball. He likes music. He likes video games.

Ben also has a little sister and both of his parents work. He's a pretty responsible kid. He's a middle schooler. After school each day, he plays some pick-up ball before he goes home. Yet Ben knows he can't shoot hoops until the sun goes down. He knows he has obligations to his family, especially his little sister.

Most days are all the same for Ben, probably like they are for you. Wake up in the morning, go to school, go home. Do homework. Maybe play some video games. Maybe hang out with friends.

But what happens when a day isn't typical. What happens when there's an emergency? How does our new friend Ben react?

Well, Ben is the star of our Choose Your Own Path to Preparedness Story called "Sharks in the Crosswalk." It's one of four Preparedness stories. Two of these stories are included in the book you received today, and two more are available online at the Ready New York website.

You see, one day, following some after-school pick-up ball, Ben heads home to his family's apartment. At first, everything seems fine, just a typical day. But as Ben gets close to his building, everything changes.



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Ben hears a whooshing sound. The streets around his apartment building are full of emergency vehicles. Ben realizes that his street has turned into a watery canyon.

Can you guess what's happening?

[unveil poster of book #1 cover]

Right in front of Ben's apartment building, the street has erupted with water from a water main break. Police cars, fire trucks, utility workers, and construction vehicles are everywhere.

Ben is confronted by something everyone experiences in an emergency—confusion! Your normal life is suddenly turned upside down.

This is what happens to Ben. Suddenly, he is looking at his life turned upside-down.

But Ben is in luck. For a number of reasons. What do you think Ben also sees?

You bet. One of these.

[hold up green CERT vest again]

In fact, as Ben is staring at a mass of water gushing out of the middle of his street, he is approached by a CERT volunteer in a green CERT vest. And this is when Ben must begin to make decisions he does not normally have to make.



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You know what's cool about all this? With this Choose Your Own Path to Preparedness Story, you get to help the main character make decisions. You read a section of the story, and then you have some choices. If you choose one thing, you go to a certain page and continue the story.

But if you make a different choice, you go to a different page and continue the story. The book and the story can be different every time you read them.

Is Ben going to stand there and watch the emergency workers? Is he going to take off and go to a friend's house?

That will be for you to decide. But there will be some things you need to remember as you make these decisions with Ben. Don't forget about his little sister, who counts on him.

Don't forget about his parents, who worry about him.

Most importantly, don't forget that something like this could happen to you in real life. Water main breaks can happen any day, and they can make things pretty inconvenient—and sometimes dangerous. And it's not just a matter of having water shut off. Electricity, natural gas, bus service, subway service, all of these things can be affected. Water main breaks can be a big deal.

So how do you get ready for an emergency situation like a water main break? Well, there's one key piece of information that is handy in this case. It's something called an Emergency Reference Card.

[unveil large poster version of the Emergency Reference Card]

This card is really important for every home and every family to have. And I can tell you, it's an important part of the story "Sharks in the Crosswalk" and for Ben.



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Does anyone know what an Emergency Reference Card is?

[Presenter can decide to solicit answers from the audience.]

An Emergency Reference Card contains stuff like important phone numbers. It also lists what you might call emergency meet-up spots.

Do you know where you should go to meet other members of your family in the event of an emergency? Where would you go to meet a brother or sister, your mom or dad, or another relative or family friend?

Do you know where to go? And can you help Ben figure it out?

That will be part of the fun of helping Ben make decisions in “Sharks in the Crosswalk.” Of course, it’ll also be fun for you to learn why this story is called “Sharks in the Crosswalk”.

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2 to 4 minutes

MAKING DECISIONS THAT AFFECT OTHERS

Making decisions is hard enough when those decisions only affect you. But let's be honest. Most decisions we make don't just have an impact on us.

If I decide right now that I want to skip to the end of this presentation, who does that impact? You know, maybe I'm kind of hungry. Or maybe I'm kind of tired. Or maybe I've just had a rough day and want to be finished.

I could quickly wrap up with a few words, send you all back to class, and be on my way. That's something I could decide.

But is that a decision that only impacts me? No, of course not.

That decision impacts everyone in this room because you might miss out on some important information. If I skip to the end, I might forget to tell you something that would come in handy in any emergency situation.

That decision impacts my coworkers because someone else will have to come here and do this presentation all over again.

That decision impacts the people here who are in charge. Who will answer the questions you may have for me? What do they do with the time they expected me to spend talking to you today?

And that decision impacts **you**. If I were to skip to the end of this presentation and leave, the worst thing that happens is you do not get the information you need to make good decisions in an emergency.

You're just like me. Many decisions you make in your life will not impact just you.

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There are decisions Ben has to make in “Sharks in the Crosswalk” that impact not just him, but his friends and neighbors as well.

I can tell you that an important piece of the decision making for you during a local emergency is getting city information by dialing 311.

Who knows about 311? Let’s have a show of hands.

311 is New York City’s main source of government information and nonemergency services. Knowing that you can contact 311 for vital information is important. You can find out about things as simple as parking conditions during an emergency; are special conditions in effect? And you can get more significant information: Are public schools open? Are evacuation orders in place? If so, for what parts of the city? Where can people go?

That’s an important one, finding out about emergency conditions and what kind of relief is available in an emergency situation. At any time, a kid like Ben, or a kid like you, could find themselves in an unexpected situation—and in need of information. Remember, 911 is for medical emergencies if you or someone else has a serious injury or a life-threatening medical condition. And you call 911 if you witness a crime in progress or if you are in immediate danger. 311 is to get information that’s important, but not an emergency.

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3 to 5 minutes

HOW YOU CAN BE PREPARED

Next, we're going to talk about ways to be prepared for emergencies. With Ben and those sharks in the crosswalk, we're looking at an emergency that is completely spontaneous. Was there any reason for Ben to expect to find a massive water main break outside his apartment building? No, of course not. This was the kind of emergency that happens all of a sudden, pretty much without warning.

That's the way many emergencies are.

Being 100 percent prepared is close to impossible. But still, you want to be as close to 100 percent as you can get. And one way to be absolutely prepared is to make sure your decision-making skills are as good as they can be.

Even if you think you are absolutely prepared for a certain emergency, things can still go wrong and problems can still arise. You'll have major decisions to make, and you'll still need to keep calm and do the right thing. One kind of emergency, such as a blizzard, could lead to another emergency, such as a power outage or transportation disruption. Large and small emergencies are often connected.

Let's think about Ben and the broken water main. Was the broken water main probably the only disruption in his day? How else did his day change unexpectedly?

[Presenter can decide to solicit answers from the audience.]



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Right, the broken water main was not Ben’s only problem. Water is no longer available in his neighborhood. Electricity and other utility services will also likely be turned off. Bus and subway service might be disrupted. And what if his school was impacted by the utility disruptions? Ben and his family might end up at an emergency shelter—or they might be instructed to shelter in place.

Does anyone know what sheltering in place is?

[Presenter can decide to solicit answers from the audience.]

That’s right, sheltering in place is basically staying put. Ben and his family might be told not to leave their apartment. Sheltering in place is sometimes just a good idea, and sometimes it is ordered by the city.

For example, during a blizzard, the city may request that you and your family shelter in place in order to keep roads clear for plowing or because the situation is simply too dangerous for people to be outside.

So imagine that you’ve just been ordered to shelter in place. What are you going to do? Well, if you’re on top of things, you have prepared an Emergency Supply Kit.

[Unveil a poster that describes the contents of an Emergency Supply Kit.]

What kind of supplies do you think should go into an Emergency Supply Kit?

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[Some items that students might mention; presenter can throw out items from this list to get the discussion started.]

- One gallon of drinking water per person per day
- Nonperishable, ready-to-eat canned foods and manual can opener
- First aid kit
- Flashlight, particularly hand-cranked
- Battery-operated AM/FM radio and extra batteries
- Whistle
- Iodine tablets or one quart of unscented bleach (for disinfecting water only if directed to do so by health officials) and eyedropper (for adding bleach to water)
- Toothpaste, toothbrushes, wet cleansing wipes, and so on
- Phone that does not require electricity
- Child care, pet care, or other special items

Well, that's a pretty good list. If you want to know everything that goes into the kit, you and your family can find the full list at our website, nyc.gov/oem.

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Stop and think about this a moment. Is there a decision to be made here? Yes, absolutely. You and your family members have to decide if you're going to be proactive and be prepared for an emergency. That's a **major** decision. It impacts a lot of people.

It's the difference between joining thousands of your neighbors in the city in long lines at supermarkets and convenience stores trying to get last-minute supplies and just being able to as they say ride it out.

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2 to 4 minutes

MAKING GROWN-UP DECISIONS

While there will be times when you need to shelter in place, such as during a blizzard, there will also be times when the city orders an evacuation and you have to get moving. And that's something else you need to be prepared for. You and everyone in your family will need one of these.

[Unveil an example of a Go Bag.]

This is called a Go Bag. Seems simple, doesn't it? A backpack or duffel bag of some kind. Big deal.

Well, preparing a Go Bag is a big deal. Do you have one? Do you think our friend Ben has one?

The New York City Office of Emergency Management recommends that every single resident of this city have one for every member of the family, including pets.

Unlike an Emergency Supply Kit, which can be as big as you want it to be, a Go Bag needs to contain the bare minimum of things you need to survive on the go. It needs to be light enough for you to carry yourself and needs to be easy to find. And it should be durable.

What are some things you think belong in a Go Bag?

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[Some items that students might mention, presenter can throw out items from this list to get the discussion started.]

- Copies of your important papers, including an Emergency Reference Card, in a waterproof bag
- Extra set of car and house keys
- Copies of credit and ATM cards (if your parents allow you to have them) and cash
- Bottled water and snacks such as energy or granola bars
- First aid kit, flashlight, and whistle
- Radio or portable music player with batteries (don't forget to pack extra batteries)
- A list of the medications each member of your family needs
- Toothpaste, toothbrushes, wet cleansing wipes, and so on
- Contact and meeting place information for your family and a small map of your section of the city
- Phone numbers of your friends and family
- Your favorite book, magazine, or game (avoid too many electronic gadgets, as you'll soon run out of batteries or places where you can charge them)

And as I mentioned earlier, if you have a pet, as one of the main characters in another of our stories does, your pet should have a Go Bag too. City shelters allow pets inside, but they need their own supplies, including food, water, a muzzle, cage, or leash.

Pack your Go Bag and keep it by your front door so it's always easy to grab. You don't want to spend time looking for it. A Go Bag must be easy to find. Grab it and go!



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CONCLUSION (will vary depending on duration of Good Idea/Bad Idea activity)

Well, that wraps up what I wanted to discuss with you today.

But before I go, I want to test your decision-making skills for a moment. Based on the things we've talked about, I want you to make some decisions you might need to make after you leave here today.

I'm going to suggest something I might do to be prepared for an emergency. Then I am going to hold up this sign.

[Hold up Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down sign. If time allows, as an alternative, speaker could have student volunteer hold sign.]

If you think my idea is a good idea, hold up your hand and give me a thumbs-up.

If you think my idea is a bad idea, hold up your hand and give me a thumbs-down.

Okay? Here we go.

My family wants to put together an Emergency Supply Kit. I'd rather count on my friendly neighborhood convenience store being open during an emergency. After all, they're ***always open***. Is my idea a good idea?

Thumbs-up if you think it is. Thumbs-down if you think my idea is a bad idea.

[Hold up sign, showing thumbs-down.]

Bad idea. I need to have all critical supplies on hand in my Emergency Supply Kit and my Go Bag.

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Next: I never use my Go Bag, so I think I'm going to lock it up in my apartment building's storage unit to keep it safe and so it's out of my way. Is that a good idea?

Thumbs-up if you think it is. Thumbs-down if you think my idea is a bad idea.

[Hold up sign, showing thumbs-down.]

Bad idea. You have to keep those Go Bags where you can get them quickly in an emergency. There's no time to dig through a crowded storage unit.

Next: Your parents each have their own cell phone, but they work long days too. So you put all their phone numbers, including work phone numbers, on an Emergency Reference Card. Good idea?

Thumbs-up if you think it is. Thumbs-down if you think my idea is a bad idea.

[Hold up sign, showing thumbs-up.]

Very good idea. While you don't want a 200-page Emergency Reference Card, you do want it to have the best information right on hand.

Next: The city is in the midst of a blizzard. You want to know if buses and the subway are running—or if it's safe to go outside. So you call 311 to get the latest information. Good idea?

Thumbs-up if you think it is. Thumbs-down if you think calling 311 is a bad idea.

[Holds up sign, showing thumbs-up.]

Excellent idea. Remember 311 is our city's main source for government information and nonemergency services.



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Next: You're on your way home, when you find yourself stopped by an unexpected emergency—maybe a building fire or a water main break. A few people in green CERT vests are standing nearby, but you ask a bunch of strangers standing around what's going on because you think you're not supposed to approach CERT volunteers. Good idea?

Thumbs-up if you think it is. Thumbs-down if you think my idea is a bad idea.

[Hold up sign, showing Thumbs-down.]

Bad idea. Get accurate information. Ask a CERT volunteer, for sure. Remember, they're there to help!

Next: You can tell yourself you're now fully prepared for any emergency in New York City or you can read the four Choose Your Own Path to Preparedness Stories, two in the book you got today and two more online at the Ready New York website. You decide to read all four stories, just to learn a little more about being prepared. Good idea?

Thumbs-up if you think it is. Thumbs-down if you think my idea is a bad idea.

[Hold up sign, showing thumbs-up.]

It's definitely a *great* idea. With Ben and the characters in our three other Choose Your Own Path to Preparedness Stories, you're going to have a lot of decisions to make. Some of them will be simple, and some of them will make you think pretty hard.

It is my hope—as well as the hope of everyone at the Office of Emergency Management—that you'll have fun learning with our Choose Your Own Path to Preparedness Stories.

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Thank you all very much for your time, and I want to thank your [school, etc] for inviting me to be here today. Enjoy the Choose Your Own Path to Preparedness story books, and share what you learn with your family and friends. The more we all spread the message of preparedness, the better!

Optional, if time allows and equipment is available, show the cartoon:

Let's wrap up with a quick video, this is a cartoon that was created by students at Goldie Maple Academy in the Rockaways.

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/oem/html/news/videos.shtml>