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Demand For Emergency Food Assistance Increases, Report Finds

By: Michael Scotto



The shaky economy has increased the demand for emergency food assistance throughout the five boroughs, according to a report released Monday by the city's Coalition Against Hunger.

The agency finds the number of people in need of emergency food assistance is up almost 21 percent over last year. The pace of the increase is a slight improvement from last year, when the coalition reported a 28 percent jump in emergency assistance from 2007.

"Hunger in this bad economy is a hurricane that is swamping low-income New Yorkers," said Joel Berg of the NYC Coalition Against Hunger. "The only good news is federal funding has been a life raft for hungry New Yorkers."

"It's the busiest of all. Even busier than after 9/11," said West Side Campaign Against Hunger Executive Director Doreen Wohl.

Agencies say that while 55 percent of emergency food programs lack the resources to meet the demand, it is an improvement over last year, when 69 percent of pantries could not feed their customers.

Senator Charles Schumer says the goal of feeding every hungry New Yorker must be met.

"It's especially the time we want to think of making sure everybody, not just on Thanksgiving but everyday, at least has a stomach that is filled with nutritious food," Schumer said. "To be hungry is a horrible thing."

The Federal Emergency Food Assistance Program included an extra \$2.3 million in funding for the city this year, increasing the total to almost \$7.5 million.