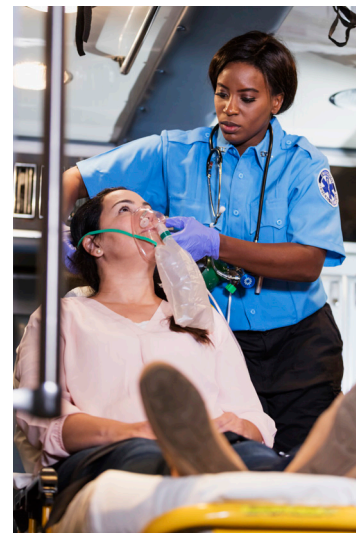


Emergency Readiness: Facing Crises with Resilience

A hospital's ability to respond and recover from emergencies and disaster incidents is a safety imperative. Hospital emergency management programs ensure hospitals can effectively respond to a wide range of emergencies and disasters. Joint Commission emergency management standards provide a comprehensive approach for improving resiliency to all types of disasters and are essential for protecting patients, staff, and infrastructure and for maintaining continuity of care.

Background

Joint Commission has included accreditation standards for emergency management since 2009 and has evolved the requirements based on best practices. The standards leverage the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA®) (2012)-defined functions of an emergency management program (consisting of responsibilities, education, exercises, etc.) and provide a framework for ensuring effective operations during all phases of a disaster (mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery).ⁱ Hospitals must be able to meet increased demand and provide uninterrupted health care services (continuity planning), be self-sustaining for up to ninety-six hoursⁱ (resource management), and prioritize use of critical resources (staffing, space, supplies). Since 2014, concepts of “disaster resiliency”^{ii,iii} have appeared in hospital emergency management programs. Disaster resiliency in hospitals is about the “capacity of hospitals to withstand, assimilate, and respond to impacts of critical situations, all while ensuring the uninterrupted delivery of essential healthcare services.”^{ii,iii} Joint Commission standards prioritize “efficient resource allocation, information technology infrastructure, in-service training, waste management, and a proactive organizational framework to build resilience.”ⁱⁱⁱ



Standards

The emergency management *National Performance Goal™* provides a framework for disaster resiliency and outlines critical components of an emergency management program. Rather than focusing on specific types of disasters, Joint Commission standards promote a comprehensive, all-hazards approach for a broad spectrum of emergencies — natural, technological, biological, or human-caused. Hospitals must:

- Ensure leadership provides oversight and support of the emergency management program
- Develop an emergency operations plan based on an all-hazards approach
- Have a communications plan that addresses how it will initiate and maintain communications during an emergency
- Maintain a staffing plan for managing all staff and volunteers during an emergency or disaster incident

- Maintain a plan for providing patient care and clinical support during an emergency or disaster incident
- Maintain a comprehensive plan that includes:
 - Safety and security measures to implement during an emergency or disaster incident
 - Managing resources and assets during an emergency or disaster incident, including plans for sustaining needs for up to 96 hours
 - Disaster recovery, including strategies for damage assessments, restoring critical systems and essential services, returning to full operations, and family reunification.
- Provide emergency management education and training based on prioritized hazards identified in the hazard vulnerability analysis
- Plan and conduct exercises to test its emergency operations plan and response procedures
- Evaluate its emergency management program, emergency operations plan, and continuity of operations plans.



Rationale

Having an effective emergency management program in place is a functional component of disaster resiliency marked by the hospital's resource utilization, redundant systems, and its ability to rapidly respond to and recover from disasters. In addition to potential loss of life and disruptions in patient care, the economic impact of disasters on hospitals are devastating: As of 2023, the average cost of a cybersecurity incident in a hospital was approximately \$10.93 million per breach.^{iv} The 2025 California wildfires are projected to result in costs of hundreds of millions to low billions of dollars to US hospitals. Hurricanes Sandy (2012) and Harvey (2017) cost hundreds of millions of dollars in hospital damage in New York City and Houston. Hospital resiliency "plays a crucial role in mitigating the societal repercussions of disasters."ⁱⁱⁱ Therefore, a comprehensive emergency management program "mitigates the impacts and minimizes mortality rates associated with such circumstances."ⁱⁱⁱ

Related Activities

- Joint Commission hosts an annual Emergency Management conference
- Joint Commission produces a bimonthly publication, *Emergency Management Leader*, specific to emergency management through our digital subscription service.
- *Emergency Management in Health Care: An All-Hazards Approach, 5th ed* publication is also available for purchase

ⁱ National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA)[®] 99: *Health Care Facilities Code*, 2012 edition. Chapter 12: Emergency Management. ⁱⁱ Zhong S, Clark M, Hou XY, Zang Y, FitzGerald G. Validation of a framework for measuring hospital disaster resilience using factor analysis. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2014 Jun 18;11(6):6335–53. doi: 10.3390/ijerph110606335. ⁱⁱⁱ Seyghalani Talab F, Ahadinezhad B, Khosravizadeh O, et al. A model of the organizational resilience of hospitals in emergencies and disasters. *BMC Emerg Med*. 2024;24:105 . <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12873-024-01026-6> ^{iv} World Economic Forum. Healthcare pays the highest price of any sector for cyberattacks, that's why cyber resilience is key. [Why the healthcare industry must prioritize cyber resilience | World Economic Forum](https://www.weforum.org/articles/2024/02/why-the-healthcare-industry-must-prioritize-cyber-resilience/). February 1, 2024.



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*National Patient Safety Goals are now a part of the National Performance Goals.



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