



CONVENING
LEADERS FOR
EMERGENCY
AND RESPONSE

Strategies for Preparing for and Responding to Natural Disasters

TIP SHEET

When a natural disaster strikes, hospital and health system leaders must respond swiftly and efficiently to safeguard patients, employees and community members while providing consistent care to current and incoming patients.

This tip sheet offers practical strategies and examples from the field to lead effectively through a public health emergency caused by a natural disaster.

Key Strategies and Considerations



BUILD AND MAINTAIN CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

STRATEGY Work with community organizations and agencies to create a network to gain fresh insights and innovate solutions that can be applied during a natural disaster.

EXAMPLE Through its established partnership with the Colorado Hospital Association, Boulder Community Health is able to request state-level support during emergencies and can connect with peers that also have dealt with natural disasters, sharing critical lessons learned and best practices.

**“We have to be adaptable;
we have to be resilient.”**

Clint Purvance, M.D.,
President and CEO, Barton Health



FOSTER ONGOING COLLABORATION AMONG EMERGENCY RESPONSE AGENCIES

STRATEGY Review and align emergency response plans with local, regional, state and federal Emergency Support Function 8 (ESF8) services to fully understand and integrate into the larger response framework. Simultaneously, enhance response coordination by collaborating with local interdisciplinary groups, including care coalitions and emergency response task forces, ensuring cross-sector collaboration and a unified approach to disaster preparedness.

EXAMPLE When the Calder Fire raged in South Tahoe, Calif., and forced evacuations, Barton Health coordinated directly with statewide emergency medical services agencies to align protocols and plans for patient transportation and support resource allocation and patient relocation.



CREATE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR HONING ADAPTIVE SKILLS

STRATEGY Regularly conduct multiple, scenario-based training to simulate various public health emergency situations. Work with staff to hone adaptive skills and develop strategies that can be used in changing circumstances.

EXAMPLE Boulder Community Health regularly conducts organization-wide drills designed to train hospital staff how to access and set up care tents during a public health emergency.



MAINTAIN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

STRATEGY Maintain transparent communication with stakeholders throughout a natural disaster and provide regular updates.

EXAMPLE During a wildfire in southeast Boulder County, Boulder Community Health sent multichannel messages almost every hour, sharing what leaders knew and what was still unknown.

STRATEGY Develop a crisis communications plan that includes key messages, key stakeholders, defined roles and responsibilities, and protocols.

EXAMPLE Barton Health has proactively developed situational communication plans for various natural disaster scenarios that can be accessed and implemented quickly and efficiently.



PROVIDE SUPPORT DURING AND AFTER A NATURAL DISASTER OCCURS

STRATEGY Ensure that resources, protocols and plans are in place to support employees as they continue working during a natural disaster in the community.

EXAMPLE Following Hurricane Ian, Lee Health provided support to staff in need by offering temporary child care services, providing transportation passes and arranging opportunities for staff to pick up essential items, like groceries, for their households.

Watch the moderated discussion on navigating natural disasters, part of the CLEAR Crisis Leadership Video Series:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=9K3v_YC7zyg&t=1s

For additional resources, tools and guidance related to emergency preparedness and response, visit www.aha.org/aha-clear.

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