

1. Integrating Hospitals Into Community Emergency Preparedness Planning

According to a recent study by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), community-based preparation for and response to disasters will require more effective communication and planning among hospitals, public health agencies and community first responders-such as fire, police and emergency medical services-than currently exist. The study also found that national benchmarks are needed to measure and promote emergency preparedness.

The study found that most acute-care hospitals are involved in communitywide drills, analyze threats and vulnerabilities with community first responders, and are in communities that have plans for mobilizing necessary supplies, equipment, and decontamination facilities in times of an emergency. However, the JCAHO study recommends drills and exercises that more truly simulate the stresses created by emergency conditions that persist over time.

Other study recommendations include the creation of healthcare organization coalitions that only together can accurately determine the adequacy of community resources to meet identified potential needs. The study finally identifies the need for national benchmarks for objectively measuring and gauging continuous improvement in emergency preparedness planning efforts.

To view the complete study, go to <http://www.annals.org/cgi/content/full/144/11/799>.