

TRACKING TRENDS

Disasters Don't Plan Ahead. You Can.

September is National Preparedness Month, a recognition that a disaster can strike at any time, often with little notice. During the past month, four devastating hurricanes hit the United States and its territories - Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Jose and Hurricane Maria. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the annual hurricane outlook has predicted an above-normal season. Forecasters have predicted eleven to 17 named systems will form in the Atlantic Ocean this season.

HARI co-leads, with the Rhode Island Department of Health, the Healthcare Coalition of Rhode Island. The coalition is a partnership of healthcare organizations, emergency responders and state government working to ensure coordinated, timely response to an emergency.

Healthcare Coalition of Rhode Island (HCRI)

The Healthcare Coalition of Rhode Island (HCRI) is federally funded by the Hospital Preparedness Program and the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Cooperative Agreements. HCRI was created to work together with the state's healthcare entities to strengthen and enhance the capabilities of Rhode Island's public health and healthcare systems to respond to evolving threats and other emergencies. HCRI is co-chaired by HARI and the Rhode Island Department of Health.



HCRI will strive to execute effective responses that:

- Prevent or reduce morbidity and mortality from public health incidents whose scale, rapid onset, or unpredictability stresses the public health and healthcare systems, and
- Ensure the earliest possible recovery and return of the public health and healthcare systems to pre-incident levels or improved functioning.

HCRI serves as the 24/7/365 support and response entity for Rhode Island's healthcare system.



Pictured above: members of the 2017 HCRI Conference Steering Committee.



RI Healthcare Emergency Preparedness Conference

This spring, HCRI hosted the Rhode Island Healthcare Emergency Preparedness Conference, which will be held on an annual basis. The event was attended by more than 170 representatives of healthcare organizations, utilities, state agencies, municipalities, and federal agencies. Session topics included hazard vulnerability assessments, active shooter incidents, utility services and healthcare facility evacuation.



Community Preparedness

The Healthcare Coalition of Rhode Island is one component of a statewide emergency preparedness and response plan. Organizations across the state are working to ensure Rhode Islanders remain safe in an emergency.

Rhode Islanders are most susceptible to hurricanes, coastal and riverine flooding, winter storms and extreme cold. According to the Rhode Island Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment, there are 21 coastal area communities in the state that are vulnerable to wave actions and wind hazards, such as hurricane storm surge. During hurricane season, Rhode Islanders are encouraged to engage in preparedness actions and plan accordingly.

To help assist America's communities with the communication and safety skills needed to save lives and property - before, during, and after a weather-related disaster - the National Weather Service (NWS) developed the StormReady program. According to NWS, StormReady communities are better prepared to save lives from the onslaught of severe weather through advanced planning, education and awareness. All Rhode Island communities are currently in the process of working toward becoming StormReady.

Looking Forward

Upcoming goals of HCRI include increasing education and training of healthcare professionals and testing facility and stakeholder capabilities through emergency exercises. HCRI has received state and federal approval to bring a contingent of 40 individuals who are involved in the patient decontamination process to FEMA's Center for Domestic Preparedness to participate in a week-long training program to improve hospital-based decontamination processes.

HARI's healthcare emergency preparedness coordinator continues to be a daily presence and resource for hospital staff as they navigate utility failures, medical surge, weather events, cyber-attacks and resource requests. These services assist hospitals in day-to-day care and emergency response.