



Emergency Management, Are You Prepared?

The importance of ensuring strong healthcare facility emergency management plans was demonstrated when an F5 level tornado, the most damaging on the Fujita scale used to rate funnel cloud destruction, demolished St. John's Regional Hospital in Joplin, Mo., on May 22, 2011. Thanks to advance planning, hospital leaders had a mobile hospital operational within one week of the devastating tornado.

Whether it is a natural disaster like the one that occurred in Joplin, Mo., or an unexpected "event" such as an equipment failure, potential disasters threaten healthcare organizations of all sizes and in all locations.

An organization can predict neither the nature of a future emergency, nor the date of its arrival. Hospitals can plan ahead, however, so they are ready to assess needs and prepare staff to respond quickly when disaster strikes. While facilities accredited by The Joint Commission will already have an Emergency Management Plan containing hazard vulnerability analysis and an emergency operations plan, they may not be as prepared as they could be.

Additional steps to preparedness can ensure that hospitals are fully prepared to respond in the face of an emergency, including:

1. **Update the Hazard Vulnerability Analysis** – Review and update the existing hazard vulnerability analysis on an annual basis to ensure the hospitals is prepared to respond and that new areas of exposure have been addressed.
2. **Update the Emergency Operations Plan** - Review and update the emergency operations plan annually to ensure that it reflects current communication, responsibilities and resources information detailing how the organization will respond to an emergency.
3. **Ensure preparedness with third-party experts** – Plans are useless unless they actually work when disaster strikes. Collaborate with an energy service company that is experienced in successful disaster recovery such as Trane to develop new or review existing plans to make sure they are thorough, complete and include everything required by The Joint Commission.

In addition to reviewing the standard requirements, an energy service partner can take it a step further and assist with exercising the emergency operations plan and updating it based on lessons learned during the emergency drill. Many times this reveals detailed opportunities for improvement such as materials availability, processes and communication, which are not visible during the initial development of the plan. Your energy services partner can provide the services and equipment needed to ensure the facility is ready to accept rental or replacement equipment saving critical time when working to bring the facility back online.

4. **Make sure you'll have what you need when you need it** – Rental services of equipment are often a valuable resource when trying to minimize down-time during critical emergencies. Completing a Memoranda of Understanding with a trusted partner as your primary supplier – and a secondary supplier as backup – gives you confidence that resources will be readily available when needed.

Taking the steps to ensure that your facility is prepared for the unforeseen allows your healthcare staff to focus on their most important mission: Patient Care.

