

Preparing for the Next Pandemic and Beyond

FOOD PROTECTION CONNECTION

Tried and true
planning methods
to avoid pitfalls
and surprises

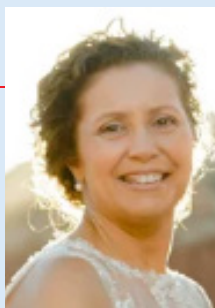
It's fairly safe to say that all of us have learned a lot over the past 21 months of the pandemic. Sometimes we discovered better methods, more efficacious methods. Some things were planned, while others were forced by necessity. And, some things we never want to experience again! This article discusses tried and true preparation planning methods that can help us avoid those pitfalls and surprises next time around, because there will, unfortunately, be a *next time*.

Most people were caught off-guard by the emergence of COVID-19. Many never imagined a scenario equivalent to this and didn't think something like this could happen or have an effect on such a global scale. With 100 year natural disasters occurring more and more often, every few years in fact, and having experienced a worldwide pandemic that

essentially shut down life as we knew it—we all need to wake up and become more vigilant of our surroundings. Expect the unexpected, because the unexpected is becoming the norm.

Healthcare facilities, schools, correctional centers, and other institutional settings and organizations play essential roles in our communities. It is vitally important that these providers maintain a constant state of emergency preparedness to ensure appropriate response and recovery within the quickest possible timeframe, and continue their ability to provide care to those who rely upon them on an ongoing basis. This is especially true when it comes to the foodservice operation within these organizations.

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Hazards, emergencies, and disasters are vast in possibility and can be natural or manmade, accidental or intentional, and they have the potential to cause adverse health and safety implications for various segments of the population. Emergency events may be externally triggered, like natural disasters and weather events, outbreaks of novel diseases, or intentional acts of terrorism. However, they may also be entirely institution-based such as a building fire, a flood caused by a burst pipe, a data breach that makes your nutrition software inaccessible, or a labor strike. Regardless of whether these emergency events are external or internal to your organization, the end result is an impact on your operating abilities that can be negative at best and catastrophic at worst.

Disasters may include hurricanes, flooding, tornados, blizzards, earthquakes, or other weather events that can result in an emergency, such as disruption of electrical service, interruption of the water supply, contamination of water, suspension of gas service, sewage backup, flooding, fire, or mass casualties. Additionally, events like pest infestation, widespread illness/disease, or labor shortages are also emergency situations that require a similar response and can be planned for accordingly.



Every foodservice operation is vulnerable to potential disasters or emergencies that could impact the safety of the food and food products used, sold, and served. To mitigate the effects of such incidents, we must possess the knowledge, resources, and capabilities necessary to prevent, prepare for, rapidly respond to, and assist in recovery from all potential hazards, with the goal of resuming operations and serving the public by ensuring availability of valuable resources (i.e., serving food safely). Providing a safe food and water supply is vitally important to facility operations in the event of any type of emergency.

As Aristotle famously stated, “Well begun is half done”—

meaning that beginning a project well makes it easier to do the rest and greatly improves your chances of success. When talking about emergency preparedness, this is accomplished through planning and preparation, which are the building blocks of an effective response. We will never succeed by only being reactive to these emergency situations. Rather, the key is prediction and prevention. Planning lends itself to more efficient use of resources, sound strategies and tactics, improved safety, lower response costs, and increased overall response effectiveness.

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FOOD SAFETY CONSEQUENCES OF DISASTERS MATRIX								
CONSEQUENCE	Earthquake	Hurricane	Tornado	Flood	Drought	Fire	Hazardous Material Release	Winter Storm
Interruption of Electrical Services	4.0	4.4	4.1	3.9	2.0	3.7	2.5	4.6
Interruption of Water	4.5	4.3	3.6	4.5	4.0	3.6	3.2	3.7
Contaminated Water Supply	4.4	4.5	3.7	4.9	3.1	3.0	4.0	3.1
Sewage Back-Up	4.0	4.2	3.4	4.8	2.6	2.6	2.6	3.0
Flooding	2.8	4.6	3.0	4.8	1.8	2.1	2.3	2.7
Fire	3.9	2.6	3.2	2.4	3.9	4.9	3.7	3.0
Gas Leak	4.3	3.0	3.4	2.7	2.4	3.6	4.0	3.1
Compromised Structural Integrity	4.5	4.0	4.3	3.7	1.9	4.7	2.4	3.6
Pest Infestation	2.4	2.8	2.2	2.8	2.3	2.0	1.8	1.8
Public Concern for Safety	4.7	4.5	4.3	4.3	2.9	4.7	4.6	4.5
Interruption of Solid Waste	3.2	3.5	3.3	3.9	2.0	2.5	2.4	2.5

Source: Association of Food and Drug Officials, https://www.afdo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Food_Emergency_Pocket_Guide_acc_updated_2018.pdf

KEY: Risk of Food Safety Consequence by Disaster				
Low		Moderate		High
1	2	3	4	5

THE PHASES OF DISASTER RESPONSE

Planning/Preparation—The primary focus of this phase should be on activities, programs, and systems that exist prior to an emergency that are used to support and enhance a response to an emergency or a disaster.

Response/Mitigation—This phase focuses on activities designed to address the immediate and short-term effects of the onset of an emergency or a disaster. This means activation of the plan, including notification/communication with appropriate individuals, and monitoring conditions in real time and making adjustments/modifications as necessary to ensure immediate safety and security.

Recovery—The focus of this phase is the determination of how the operation returns to ‘normal’ pre-emergency operations and standards. And, if necessary, what recuperation measures are needed.

The first step in disaster planning is to identify risks and predict threats. Start by putting together a multidisciplinary team within your organization to identify potential predictable and

unpredictable threats and all possible scenarios that could cause a risk within your organization. At this initial high level stage, anything goes and nothing is off the table. If someone states “zombie apocalypse” as a possible risk, write it down. All levels and disciplines should be represented in this planning stage. In addition to food services, this would include executives, clinical, maintenance, environmental services, information technology, security, legal, and anyone else deemed a valuable contributor who would be affected by an emergency in your facility. The key to surviving during and after a disaster is advance planning.

Once you’ve contributed to identifying risk factors facility-wide, it’s time to start digging into the foodservice-specific disaster plan. Food and nutrition services departments must be prepared to serve meals and supply potable water—regardless of the situation. Create a preparedness plan that provides detailed information on planning for emergencies, providing safe food and water supplies, and preparing meals during various possible scenarios. It’s imperative to have solutions in place before the issue arises.

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- Plan for emergency food and water supplies (have a plan set-up with your food distributor and have predetermined on-hand emergency inventory).
- Plan three-day and seven-day emergency menus.
- Plan for food and water needs in case of evacuation.
- Plan for the safety of foods during a power outage (lack of refrigeration/freezers).
- Plan for meal preparation in the event of loss of utilities (cooking methods, alternative menu items, disposable paper goods/flatware, etc.).
- Plan for the prioritization of utilizing perishable food items.
- Plan for staff shortages (widespread external disaster, internal illness cluster, labor strike, etc.).
- Ensure your plan meets the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services or The Joint Commission guidelines (only applicable to healthcare facilities).

Training is crucial in preparing staff to respond to the situation effectively. Developing, revising, and testing the emergency plan is essential to its smooth operation when in an actual crisis. Train staff regarding the plan and safety procedures. On-the-job training, including running mock emergency drills, results in enhanced comfort

levels of staff. Many state laws and regulations require hospitals and other licensed healthcare facilities to engage in emergency planning and drills. You should review and conduct this training annually and keep documentation of the training. Additionally, it's important in light of the primary focus on planning for the emergency preparedness of the facility, to not lose sight of your staff as people. Ensure staff have personal and family preparedness plans, and are comfortable both personally and professionally in the event of an emergency or a disaster.

Effective communication during emergencies and disasters enhances the accuracy and efficiency with which we respond, however during emergencies, clear and timely communication between key personnel can be a challenge. There must be a pre-identified chain-of-command or communication hierarchy list so that staff knows who and how to contact the appropriate person within the organization when made aware of an emergency and to report their status. Make sure this Communication Plan clearly identifies people by name, position, department, key responsibilities in the disaster response, and includes their work and cell phone numbers. Additional challenges can occur during emergencies, such as phone and data outages or overloaded cellular



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systems causing an inability to communicate. This will need to be addressed in your policies with potential alternative contact plans for these situations.

During a disaster, sometimes the menus that were written cannot be followed, due to unavailable ingredients or food items, lack of staff, a need to utilize certain ingredients first so as to prevent spoilage, or utilities being unavailable (whether that be electricity to power refrigeration/freezers or gas for cooking). Disaster menus should be used as guides, and may need to be adjusted during the actual disaster response phase.

In healthcare settings in particular, prescribed diets and nutritional guidelines are

of concern, because during a disaster response, these may not be able to be met. Extreme circumstances call for extreme measures, so you may need to make substitutions as needed to maximize utilization of available ingredients and resident/patient intake. Your pre-established policies in addition to an accurate communication plan will be key for staff to gain the approval of CDM, CFPPs and RDNs for diet changes and food substitutions.

Also, foodborne pathogens don't care that you're operating under emergency circumstances, so it is imperative that you continue to follow all food safety protocols, because the last thing the already-stressed

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facility needs is a foodborne illness outbreak during a disaster. So, always check temperatures of food items prior to serving (cold foods must be below 41°F and hot foods must be above 135°F).

SUMMING IT UP

Emergencies of all types increase our vulnerabilities and alter our ability to operate our foodservice operations at full capacity. The best

line of defense when the unexpected becomes the norm is heightened vigilance of our environment, including predictive and preventive

planning to enhance our readiness for whatever situation comes along. The question is not *if* another

pandemic will come, but rather *when* is it coming? **E**

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

- https://www.afdo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Food_Emergency_Pocket_Guide_acc_updated_2018.pdf
- <https://www.beckydorner.com/tips-resources/emergencydisaster-planning/>
- <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/SurveyCertEmergPrep/Emergency-Prep-Rule>
- Tap into your chemical supplier, who may have some great disaster recovery resources available to share.

CE Questions: Food Protection Connection



This Level II article provides basic to advanced resources. The desired outcome is to facilitate application of knowledge into practice by drawing connections among ideas and using information in new situations.

Reading *Preparing for the Next Pandemic and Beyond* and successfully completing these questions online has been approved for 1 hour of Sanitation continuing education for CDM, CFPPs. CE credit is available ONLINE ONLY. To earn 1 SAN CE hour, access the online CE quiz in the ANFP Marketplace. Visit **www.ANFPonline.org/market** and select “**CE Articles**” within the Publications Section. If you don't see your article title on the first page, then search the title, “*Preparing for the Next Pandemic and Beyond*.” Once on the article title page, purchase the article and complete the CE quiz.

- The phases of disaster response are:
 - Planning, response, recovery
 - Planning, communication, recovery
 - Preparation, planning, prediction
- Communication is key during disaster response; which of the following would cause a breakdown in communication?
 - Predetermining a crisis management hierarchy identifying specific responsibilities
 - Having access to a list of names and phone numbers for key personnel
 - Data outages and cellular network failures
- Hazards and emergencies cannot be accidental.
 - True
 - False
- Which is *not* a reason to alter the disaster menu?
 - To utilize certain ingredients first so as to prevent spoilage
 - The cook doesn't like making that specific menu item
 - Certain utilities and equipment are unavailable
- One of the best ways to provide training to your staff and prepare them for a disaster is:
 - Running mock drills
 - Taking inventory of emergency supplies
 - Sharing their cell phone number with their colleagues
- Weather events that can result in an emergency include:
 - Tornado, blizzard, power outage
 - Hurricane, flood, pest infestation
 - Flood, tornado, hurricane, blizzard
- Disaster menus are set in stone and must be followed no matter what during the actual disaster response phase.
 - True
 - False