

Public Health Emergency Preparedness

Protecting Health, Saving Lives and
Strengthening America's National Security






Emergency Preparedness Is Different From Emergency Response: We Need Both!

Emergency preparedness requires sufficient, continual investment and planning to be ready when an emergency happens.

Preparedness means local authorities have the tools they need to respond at a moment's notice to all hazards, from hurricanes and respiratory viruses to chemical spills and cyberattacks.




Examples of preparedness resources are:

-  Trained responders who have gone through exercises for a variety of hazards
-  Detailed emergency plans that guide actions when hazards arise
-  Strong relationships within and between states

Emergency response requires a fast influx of funds to temporarily surge resources that rely on infrastructure built by preparedness.

Response reduces the impact of an emergency's harmful effects. It does not support recovery work such as improvements to general plans, systems and technologies. When response funding ends, so do the extra resources.

Examples of response resources are:

-  Additional temporary staff to respond to hazards
-  Temporary housing for emergency responders
-  Extra medical supplies

People Are Vital to Emergency Preparedness

The most important element of public health emergency preparedness is people — trained and ready to be deployed — including:

- Lab technicians
- Disease detectives
- Doctors and nurses
- Hospital managers who train staff for emergency response
- Community organizers
- Communication experts

Building a strong workforce takes time and needs to happen before an emergency occurs, but **funding cuts to public health** over the past 10 years have resulted in the **loss of 60,000 state and local jobs** across the country. A smaller workforce makes it harder to be prepared and save lives during an emergency.

If given sufficient, continual funding, the staff hired today will be seasoned and reliable experts for tomorrow's emergencies.



Today's Public Health System Needs More Support



COVID-19 is just one of many emergencies that America's health departments face today: Global climate change is making extreme weather stronger and more frequent, widening the range of vector-borne diseases and increasing the risk of spreading novel pathogens like COVID-19. These growing threats require a stronger and more prepared public health system to prevent future health disasters.



The COVID-19 public health emergency has pushed America's health system to its limits. Yet, the response to and recovery from COVID-19 will continue to require a significant investment of resources and people power for years to come. The public health system needs support for America to recover.



Multiple and overlapping emergencies increase the strain on limited public health resources and require health departments to plan to have greater capacity to effectively respond. It is essential that the public health system receives sufficient funding and other resources today, so that it can effectively respond to the many emergencies of tomorrow.

How Is Public Health Protecting Your Community?

In the summer of 2021, thanks to its emergency preparedness efforts, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC Health Department):

- ✓ Managed the outbreak of COVID-19 and reduced hospitalizations and deaths by giving millions of New Yorkers vaccine shots and providing up-to-date COVID-19 information and related health services
- ✓ Responded to a Legionnaires' disease outbreak
- ✓ Prepared for two tropical storms

At the same time, the NYC Health Department continued regular operations by:

- ✓ Addressing public health hazards, such as the increase in opioid use and overdoses and increased need for mental health services
- ✓ Operating the city's disease surveillance systems
- ✓ Providing critical services through the city's sexual health clinics
- ✓ Conducting health and safety inspections in the community
- ✓ And much more — visit nyc.gov/health for information about additional Health Department programs



The success of a response to a public health emergency depends on both **the preparation for the emergency** and **the way the emergency response is carried out**, including how it is funded and staffed and how policy is set, adjusted and utilized.