



## **As Hurricane Season Begins Poll Shows Americans Fear Natural Disasters Affecting Their Communities More than Terrorism, Global Pandemic or Environmental Disasters Combined**

*Results Shows Weaknesses in How Americans Would Address Their Health Conditions During a Disaster*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. – June 1, 2016:** As America approaches hurricane and tornado season, a new survey of 1,122 adults shows the greatest single concern for individuals among catastrophic events is the potential of a natural disaster (32 percent), such as a hurricane, tornado, flood or wildfire affecting their community. America's concern about natural disasters far surpasses worry about terrorist attacks (14 percent), cyber-attacks (six percent), or environmental disasters (five percent). The poll was conducted by international polling firm YouGov for Healthcare Ready, a Washington D.C. non-profit that works with the public and private sector to address health care resiliency before, during and after disasters. Despite growing coverage of the Zika virus, fears of an outbreak of a global disease affecting communities tied for fifth (six percent) out of nine options.

"The results from this survey show Americans understand the devastating impact a natural disaster can have on their communities, but it also shows weakness about how and where people will get their medical information in a disaster," said Emily Lord, executive director of Healthcare Ready. "This is an opportunity for the public and private healthcare sectors to come together to build and maintain the resiliency of communities, so that patients can be cared for and families are able to return to their lives as soon as possible after a disaster."

The survey was conducted at a time (May 16 - 17, 2016), when topics of disasters, including tornadoes, floods, terrorism and the Zika virus had been recently in the news. Among the survey's findings:

- **Thirty percent** of Americans consider police and fire departments to be their most trusted source of information on how to prepare for, and manage health conditions during a disaster.
- **One in four** Americans have discussed emergency evacuation plans with their loved ones.
- If they had to evacuate their homes without their medications or medical supplies, **less than half** of Americans (43%) could list all of their prescriptions, including the dosage.
- **Three in four** (74%) Americans are confident they could reach the next nearest hospital to them during a disaster, if the closest hospital to them was closed.
- **Only two in five American adults** (37%) feel comfortable that their elderly relatives will be safely evacuated during a natural disaster.

Survey respondents expressed the expectation they would receive information on how to prepare for and manage health conditions during disasters from police and fire departments.

"It's important to realize that police and fire departments will be busy responding to emergency situations and cannot coach people on how to manage their health conditions. Similarly, in a major evacuation event like Hurricane Katrina, hospitals may not be equipped to handle the significant number of acute hospitalizations and help everyone who has questions about managing their health conditions. Communities need to understand this and plan for alternative sources of health care information, such as local pharmacies and community health centers," said Lord.

A strong healthcare system and advanced planning are the cornerstones of community resilience, especially during a disaster. When an emergency situation occurs, people may think about evacuation or medical needs, but few if any, have gone the extra step to create and discuss a plan with family members or plan for how to recharge essential medical devices or refill life-saving prescriptions.

“Community resiliency goes beyond the coordination between government officials and business leaders,” said Lord. “When disaster strikes, balancing the immediate needs of response and rescue with the coordination necessary to recover quickly is made significantly easier if community residents have prepared in advance.”

There are small things people can do now, to help prepare for an extreme weather or disaster situation:

- Keep a written list of prescriptions, including dosage information, in a safe space. Healthcare Ready has a free printable card at [www.healthcareready.org/rx-on-the-run](http://www.healthcareready.org/rx-on-the-run).
- Prepare an emergency kit with food, water, flashlights, batteries, blankets, clothing and medical supplies for either sheltering-in-place or if you have to evacuate.
- Map out where local hospitals, urgent care clinics and pharmacies are.
- Discuss evacuation plans, meeting points, and support for frail elderly family members and neighbors who may need help.

“During an extreme situation, like a hurricane or terrorist attack, people may often feel confused or stressed, but having a clear plan in place before you need it can help families remain calm and prepared,” says Lord.

Beyond the challenges identified by the survey, there are larger needs requiring the public and private sectors to work together to respond during times of disasters. Many disasters happen over large areas that cross multiple county and state lines. Understanding what communities should prioritize, including power, communications, and continuation of healthcare is critical to protecting residents. Additionally, allowing critical personnel and deliveries access to disaster sites often requires coordination and understanding among various parties.

The overall survey findings illuminate many useful insights around what many Americans are concerned about and how prepared they feel for a natural disaster or emergency. As the convener of public and private sector healthcare and emergency management, Healthcare Ready, is prepared to help address and provide resources to help fill some of the gaps or concerns people shared in the survey.

For more information on the survey and to view the full results please visit

[https://www.healthcareready.org/system/cms/files/1296/files/original/Disaster\\_Survey\\_Results\\_May\\_2016.pdf](https://www.healthcareready.org/system/cms/files/1296/files/original/Disaster_Survey_Results_May_2016.pdf).

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### **About Healthcare Ready**

Healthcare Ready works to ensure continued patient access to healthcare by strengthening public private collaboration and addressing pressing issues before, during, and after disasters and disease outbreaks. As the convener of industry and government, Healthcare Ready safeguards patient health by providing solutions to critical problems and identifying best practices for healthcare preparedness and response.

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### **About the YouGov survey**

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,122 adults. Fieldwork

was undertaken between 16th - 17th May 2016. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all US adults (aged 18+).