

The Perfect Storm: Preparing the USPHS Dental Commissioned Corps for the Unthinkable

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The Unthinkable

Unthinkable Events Might Include: Biological, Chemical & Nuclear Threats, and Natural Disasters

Properly trained dentists have a role in response to bioterrorism, natural disasters, and emerging diseases, particularly in the areas of:

Education

Diagnosis

Surveillance and notification

Distribution of medications

Decontamination

Sample collection

Forensics



A Cross-section of Recommendations from the 2003 ADA Conference on Dentistry's Role in Catastrophic Events added the following:

- **Triage, with proper training, if one finds themselves in proximity to a mass casualty event**
- **Vaccinations: pre-event or post-event**
- **Primary care, with proper training, if medical delivery systems compromised**
- **Administration / liaison with local and state Health Departments, NDMS and other response groups**



Dental Responders and Dentistry's Role in Extraordinary Events

- Dentists have a role in emergency response because they have the patient care skills, medical knowledge and communication skills
- Dentists need to make themselves known, and let it be known that they are willing to help

VADM Richard Carmona
Former Surgeon General, USPHS



Dentistry's Role:

- The traditional role of forensics will continue as long as there are mass disasters
- Other roles that need to be developed are:
 - Diagnosis and oral manifestations
 - Trauma management
 - Disease surveillance

Dr. Michael Alfano

Dean, NYU College of Dentistry





Hurricane Katrina



**New Orleans, LA.
September 2005**

www.KatrinaDestruction.com

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**The experiences of the Dental Category
with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita
provided insight to stimulate needed
actions and to lead the expansion of
our knowledge and practices in
addressing national disasters**



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While each event is different, the lessons learned during and after each event help us with honing the critical skills, communications, collaborations and policies to be better prepared for the future.



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Hurricane Katrina and Rita: Deployments

Approximately 20% of the Dental Category officers were deployed on nearly 90 missions

Defining event for the transformation of the Commissioned Corps

January 18, 2006: Corps Transformation announcement by HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt

February 23, 2006: White House report. [Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned](#)



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Hurricane Katrina and Rita: Deployment Roles

- Clinical Care
- Disaster Mortuary Response Teams
- Epidemiologists
- Liaison Officers
- Secretary's Emergency Response Teams
- Facilitating Delivery of Donated Supplies/Services
- Supporting State Dental Directors
- Establishing Critical Connections (e.g., with dental schools, state and local societies)



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Hurricane Katrina and Rita: What have we learned?

- Imperative for Readiness
- Enhancing preparedness by taking advantage of training opportunities
- Establishing and maintaining an ongoing “Dental Response Team” for enhanced communications
- Need for clarifying dentistry’s role in responding to catastrophic events
- Increasing understanding of emergency response system



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Hurricane Katrina and Rita: What have we learned?

- Issues related to access to licensure documents
- Rapid credentialing
- Tort and malpractice issues for civilian dentist volunteers
- Safe storage and appropriate distribution of donated supplies and materials
- Need for an oral/dental disaster response plan template to aid state/regional/federal disaster planners and key health partners to expand their local response plans
- The need for feedback for Volunteers and for donated supplies and equipment

What can the dental profession do?

- Integrate dentistry into the response system
- Increase communication within and between professions
- Support legislation to protect responding dentists for liability in appropriate response activities
- Volunteerism – utilization of skills such as teaching, administration, patient counseling
- Get trained: expand knowledge of disease recognition, triage, leadership, augmentation of existing responders
- Collaborate with local/state Health Department officials and market the dental profession's skills and capabilities



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