

# Health Professional's Role in Disaster Planning

## A STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT APPROACH

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**T**his article demonstrates use of the Strategic Management for Total Quality in Health Care model (Graeter, 1994) as a tool for enhancing the role of the health professional in disaster planning. The model uses strategic management methods to promote total quality health care programs. It was designed to expand the problem solving skills of health professionals and help them participate effectively in complex, interdisciplinary projects.

The role of the health professional in disaster planning may vary depending on factors such as the size and type of company. Disaster planning responsibilities of health professionals include: participation on the disaster planning committee; development of those sections of the disaster plan that are within the health professional's

scope of practice; and development of training programs within the scope of practice. In this article, the authors provide a strategic management model and concise disaster planning content summaries to assist health professionals with disaster planning.

### PURPOSE OF DISASTER PLANNING

The purpose of disaster planning is to prevent injury, limit property damage and capital losses, and return to full production after a disaster. Approximately 10% of United States' companies have complete disaster plans, and less than 50% of companies hit by a disaster fully recover (Shalowitz, 1990). This suggests that disaster planning should become a priority.

Disaster planning requires assessing the types of probable disasters, the capability of current resources to respond to anticipated disasters, the needs of ongoing training, and the need for facility improvements. An effective plan provides for the ability to respond automatically in the event of a disaster, avoiding delays caused by decision making. It empowers personnel with the skills, resources, and confidence needed to respond effectively. A disaster plan benefits business by saving lives, protecting physical property, maintaining productivity, promoting cost avoidance, ensuring compliance with the law, and enhancing employee relations. Disaster planning is one of the most important functions of the occupational health professional.

### FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING A DISASTER PLAN

#### *Legal Requirements*

The legal requirements that impact a company's disaster plan can be confusing because they vary according to the company's geographical location and manufacturing process. Federal, state, and in some cases, municipal standards mandate a company's legal responsibilities in a disaster response program. Federal agencies promulgating mandatory standards include the Occupational

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