

DISASTER HEALTH PROGRAM

PART I. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

1. Objectives

Preparation of the individual, the community, and the various States to increase their capability to survive and recover from health hazards introduced by major disaster.

2. Operation

In preparation for a major disaster, the Public Health Service stockpiles emergency medical supplies and equipment for use by the ongoing community medical facilities. These materials are stored both at the community level as fully equipped 200-bed packaged disaster hospitals ready for immediate use and in a national depot system that provides backup stocks to the packaged disaster hospitals and to the ongoing community hospitals. In addition, educational programs are conducted in disaster medical care for professional, technical, and lay personnel. These training programs are supported by assignment of full-time program consultants at the State and regional level, by the provision of training materials for all levels of disaster health training, and by the publication of training, technical, planning, and preparedness guides. Consultation and technical assistance are provided to State and local communities in writing plans for the provision of emergency health services in a major disaster. In addition, the Service administers a national training program of medical self-help which is funded by the Department of Defense through the Office of Civil Defense.

3. History

The Service has provided disaster relief services and assistance to the States and communities since 1874. Growing out of agency involvement in Federal mobilization activities during World War II, and in response to increased national preparedness needs, more frequent natural disasters, and increased threat of attack, a Health Emergency Planning Office was established in 1953. In anticipation of a delegation of greatly increased PHS authority and funds appropriation, an expanded Health Mobilization Organization was established in 1959. Responsibility for the civil defense medical stockpile was transferred to the Service in 1961. The nationwide medical self-help training program was developed in 1962.

4. Level of operations. (See table 1.)

Program: Disaster health program.

Department or agency, and office or bureau: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; Public Health Service—Office of the Surgeon General.