

AAP Disaster Preparedness

Take Steps to Prepare During the 2015 Hurricane Season

Hurricane season began on June 1, 2015, and extends through November 30, 2015. Advanced preparedness planning within pediatric office practices can mitigate risk, reduce physical and operational losses, improve financial stability, strengthen the medical home, and help promote the health of the children in the community. The AAP and its Disaster Preparedness Advisory Council (DPAC) urge pediatricians to take action to promote the health and well-being of children in disasters.

Hurricanes can result in **flash floods**. Floods are one of the most common hazards in the United States and account for approximately 30% of disasters worldwide. Take time now to prepare your facility by discussing the **Preparedness Checklist for Pediatric Practices** with office staff. Identify disasters that are most likely to happen in your community. Locate and review your office insurance policies to ensure you have the correct coverage. Pay special attention to exclusions, limits, and deductibles.

Hurricanes and severe storms can cause power failure or facility damage, so it's important to have plans to keep vaccines safe. Consider whether you need a back-up generator and take steps to develop an emergency vaccine storage and handling plan. Review the **AAP Immunization Resources Storage and Handling Series: Disaster Planning** tip sheet for more information.

Families view primary care physicians, such as pediatricians, as one of the most trusted sources of information about various health topics, including preparing for emergencies and disasters. Use hurricane season as a chance to encourage families to prepare for disasters. Families can start by compiling a **Disaster Supply Kit**, developing a written disaster plan, and discussing this plan with their children.

For information on AAP disaster preparedness and response initiatives and resources, review **newsletters**, e-mail DisasterReady@aap.org, or visit the **AAP Children & Disasters Web site**.

Get Ready for National Preparedness Month

September marks the 12th annual **National Preparedness Month**. The goal of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-backed campaign is to enable citizens to prepare for and respond to all types of emergencies, including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks. The FEMA offers information on how to combat certain **threats** including wildfires, tornados, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and winter storms.

On the **AAP National Preparedness Month Web page**, pediatricians will find steps they can take to help promote pediatric preparedness during September. Strategies on how to join in National Preparedness Month activities; enhance influenza prevention and control; create disaster supplies kits and emergency plans; and how to get involved in preparedness activities in your community are shared.

On August 29, 2015, it will have been 10 years since **Hurricane Katrina**. This anniversary serves as a reminder that disaster planning must address the unique needs of children. It is essential that pediatricians, particularly those with an interest in disaster management, be included in all aspects of disaster planning at local, state, regional, and national levels. Pediatricians and other providers are well-suited to educate families on aspects of **disaster planning**. Pediatricians can help by advising families directly or providing information with respect to available resources. During an upcoming patient visit, pediatricians should encourage families to fill out an **Emergency Information Form**, for their child and save it electronically and in paper form.

Much progress has been made since Hurricane Katrina, including the formation of the **National Advisory Committee on Children and Disasters** and the release of the **2012-2013 Report of the Children's HHS Interagency Leadership on Disasters (CHILD) Working Group: Update on Departmental Activities and Areas for Future Consideration**. On August 29th or any time in September, remember to share preparedness tips with office staff and families. Review the **Preparedness Checklist for Pediatric Practices** for ideas.

For more information, e-mail DisasterReady@aap.org or visit the **AAP Children & Disasters Web site**.