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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: Will Your Disaster Plan be Your Next Disaster?

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It is critically important that food service professionals and support staff are prepared for disasters to safeguard themselves and the facility during disasters. In the U.S. there has been a significantly heightened focus on disasters since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in New York, Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania.

An emergency is defined as an unexpected event that significantly disrupts the facilities' ability to provide care or that results in an increased demand for services. Emergencies can be either human made (terrorist, unrest) or natural (such as an electrical system failure, hurricane or tornado) or a combination of both. A disaster is a type of emergency that, due to its complexity, scope, or duration threatens the facilities' capabilities and requires outside assistance to sustain care, safety or security functions.

severity and number of people affected by these disasters made them catastrophic in loss of lives and total costs. Sixteen of these disasters cost \$1 billion to \$3 billion with a new record of \$306 billion in disaster losses.

2018 had 124 major declared disasters, 14 of which were over \$1 billion in damage with a total of \$91 billion in disaster losses. Hurricane Michael in Florida, Hurricane Florence in the Carolinas, and wildfires in the West contributed 80% (\$73 billion) of the disaster losses.

2019 had 101 major declared disasters, again with 14 over \$1 billion in damage with a total of \$45 billion reported by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as of January 8, 2020. As of January 31, 2020, there are already 5 major disaster declarations for this year.

The All-Hazards Approach is needed when planning to address potential disaster needs. These hazards may include:

- Loss of normal water supply
- Loss of heat
- Loss of power
- Economic disruption
- Armed individuals
- Bomb threats
- Bioterrorism
- Civil Unrest
- Gas leak
- Fire or smoke
- Severe weather
- Earthquake
- Flooding
- Tornado

continued on page 34



Source: FEMA.gov

2010-2019: A landmark decade of U.S. billion-dollar weather and climate disasters saw a significant number of billion dollar events in the US. 2017 was the record-breaking year in the decade. In fact, while FEMA recognized 137 separate "Major Disaster Declarations" in 2017, about an average number for the past decade, the

Emergency plans are needed, but how good is the plan for your facility? Does your facility have:

- A written emergency plan
- Trained staff
- Testing the emergency plan with drills
- Disaster menus and food supplies that can be used if the kitchen is destroyed or the facility is evacuated
- Disaster menus with nutritional analysis suitable for therapeutic medical diets, religious diets, and texture modified diets
- Food and water supply on-site for at least 3 days, if not up to 10 days depending on the All Hazard Approach analysis, in case the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with vendors cannot be fulfilled

Help is available with planning from local, county, and state emergency management organizations. Resources are also available from these government agencies:

- www.FEMA.gov
Federal Emergency Management Agency
- www.asprtracie.hhs.gov
ASPR TRACIE – government preparedness information gateway that provides access to information and resources to improve preparedness and response.

Consistent and comprehensive emergency preparedness will enhance the resiliency of facilities and prevent loss of life while reducing disaster recovery costs. Don't let the disaster plan for the facility be your next disaster! ■

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