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## What's New for 2009 Hurricane Season?

### Rx Response Unveils the *Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool* to Assist Hurricane Stricken Communities

Washington, D.C. – Rx Response, an unprecedented initiative of America's pharmaceutical supply system that helps ensure the continued flow of medicine in a severe public health emergency, is launching a powerful new tool in time for the 2009 hurricane season. The *Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool* is a new initiative that will help citizens, emergency managers and public health officials know what pharmacies have resumed serving the public following a disaster.

The inspiration for the *Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool* came during the 2008 hurricane season when Rx Response officials realized after Hurricanes Gustav and Ike how important their status reports detailing which pharmacies had re-opened were to emergency management officials. The new reports gave public health officials first-of-its-kind status reports about a vital public health asset that had restored its service to the public. The reports also enabled American Red Cross Disaster Health Services volunteers and emergency room physicians to send patients who needed to fill prescriptions to pharmacies they knew were open. This capability was anchored in the frequent post-storm communications occurring between Rx Response and its members, including the National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) and the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA). Both NACDS and NCPA were monitoring reports from their member companies' stores and sharing that information with Rx Response officials who in turn provided it to federal and state emergency management agencies.

Inspired by the success of its largely manual process of reporting open pharmacies, Rx Response officials realized they could significantly enhance this reporting capacity by using electronic records processing data to determine which pharmacies were open following a hurricane. This realization was based on the assumption that if a pharmacy was transmitting billing details, it was most likely open for business.

Based on that assumption, Rx Response partnered with the National Council for Prescription Drugs Program (NCPDP) to track which pharmacies in a disaster area are submitting prescription claims. NCPDP members process virtually every electronic billing transaction generated in the nation's 55,000 community pharmacies. By tapping into the data feed on a frequent basis, Rx Response is able to secure daily reports about open pharmacies. Rx Response then includes this information in its *Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool* available at [www.RxResponse.org](http://www.RxResponse.org). The tool shows the location of open pharmacies on a map and provides contact information so individuals can call a pharmacy to inquire about hours of operation or the supply of a specific

medicine. The reporting tool will also automatically compile a list of the nearest open pharmacies based on where a person is located.

“This is an unprecedented new capability that we are providing to the public, as well as the nation’s emergency management and public health community,” said Erin Mullen, R.Ph., Ph.D., Rx Response Director. “We are very proud of what we have accomplished and are grateful to our Rx Response partners along with NCPDP for making this unprecedented asset possible.”

The American Red Cross hailed the new tool as an important contribution to enhancing post-disaster services to evacuees. “This new Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool will provide valuable help and enable Red Cross Disaster Health Services volunteers to send evacuees needing prescription medicines to pharmacies that we know are open,” said Joe Becker, Senior Vice President for Disaster Services. The American Red Cross has been an active partner in Rx Response and sits on the Rx Response Coordinating Body, the governing arm of Rx Response.

The *Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool* got its first test earlier this year during the Kentucky ice storms in January, when massive power outages throughout Kentucky forced the closure of dozens of pharmacies. Rx Response officials deployed their reporting tool in concert with NCPDP and Kentucky public health officials.

“This reporting capability was critical because it allowed us to know which pharmacies were open and this was critical in the ice storm,” said Richard Dugas, Strategic National Stockpile Coordinator for the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services. “We had to assume everything was closed and the reports allowed us to pass back to the local commands where they could go to get medicine and pharmaceutical supplies.”

In addition to its new *Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool*, Rx Response continues to build its overall program. Developed over 2 years ago in response to Hurricane Katrina and the threat of pandemic influenza, Rx Response provides the first ever single point of contact for the entire pharmaceutical supply system and relies on a robust network that allows federal and state emergency management officials to communicate with Rx Response regarding pharmaceutical needs and other issues which may impact the supply system. The communications are actively monitored by all segments of the pharmaceutical supply system to ensure the fastest possible resolution.

Rx Response members include:

- American Hospital Association (AHA)
- American Red Cross
- Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO)
- Generic Pharmaceutical Association (GPHA)
- Healthcare Distribution Management Association (HDMA)
- National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS)

# News Release



- National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA)
- Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA)

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