



# Rx Response Report:

## Winter 2013 Update

### Hurricane Sandy Tests Rx Response's Business Continuity Plan

Rx Response Director Erin Mullen is a former practicing pharmacist with significant personal experience responding to disasters. As a member of a federal Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT), Mullen was deployed to provide support to Hurricane Charley victims in 2004. She was later deployed for Hurricane Katrina and was also dispatched to Haiti to lend her practical experience as a pharmacist and emergency manager to earthquake relief operations.

Mullen's work as Director of Rx Response, coupled with her experience as a member of a DMAT, made her an ideal candidate to serve as a member of a federal Logistics Response Assistance Team (LRAT), a unit that operates within the Department of Health and Human Services. She assumed this position in 2011.

As Mullen prepared for Hurricane Sandy along with her support team, she had a creeping suspicion her role in responding to Sandy would shift. Two days after Sandy made landfall, Mullen's LRAT team was activated. With little notice, she was en route to New York City where she helped manage pharmacy operations that supported several DMAT teams operating in the impacted area.

Mullen's deployment from the helm of Rx Response lasted more than a month and triggered Rx Response's own contingency plan, which tapped Rx Response's deep bench strength to insure successful and uninterrupted operations.

### Hurricane Sandy Solidifies Rx Response Status as Vital Homeland Security Asset

As Hurricane Sandy pounded the New Jersey shore, federal officials were already in contact with Rx Response, seeking early assessments of Sandy's impact on retail pharmacy operations and the broader bio-pharmaceutical industry supply chain. Rx Response was ready, having elevated to *Engaged* status, its highest alert level prior to landfall, triggering a fevered pitch of activity over the next 72 hours.



Rx Response helped coordinate the setup of recharging stations at pharmacies to assist people who had lost power.

The Department of Health and Human Services' Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) Program held daily conference calls with nearly 200 senior government officials and industry leaders. Rx Response was at the table, answering questions and briefing HHS officials on the status of the bio-pharmaceutical supply chain. During one CIP briefing, a speaker announced the need for recharging stations for people who had lost power and were relying on battery powered medical devices. Rx Response alerted members NACDS and NCPA to the need, both of which in turn quickly passed the message along to retail pharmacies. Shortly, Walgreens and several independent pharmacies in the affected area made stores who had regained power available for recharging to whoever needed it.

Rx Response's Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool (PSRT) became an indispensable resource for both emergency managers and citizens looking to locate open pharmacies. Unprecedented national and regional media coverage of the online resource quadrupled web traffic and also generated numerous requests from independent pharmacies to become part of the tool's database.

Fuel shortages quickly became a focal point of coordination between Rx Response and government officials. Pharmaceutical delivery trucks became stuck in gridlocked traffic, coming dangerously close to running out of fuel. Federal officials connected Rx Response with the New York City police department, which provided a hotline where police escorts

## Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano Praises Rx Response Effort

In a call to PhRMA CEO John Castellani on December 5th, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano thanked Castellani for Rx Response's efforts following Hurricane Sandy.

The Director of Homeland Security singled out the Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool in her message of appreciation. Napolitano also addressed the important lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina about ensuring access to medication, the key inspiration that led PhRMA to create Rx Response.

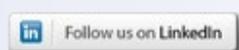
"Getting a phone call of thanks from Secretary Napolitano is not only an honor but a recognition of how valuable Rx Response has become in helping America respond to major disasters," said Castellani.

## Rx Response Steps Up Use of Social Media During Hurricanes Sandy and Isaac

Rx Response's stepped up use of social media was timely for the historic 2012 hurricane season. An active Twitter campaign began last summer and intensified during Hurricanes Isaac and Sandy, helping to spread the word about Rx Response activations and the Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool. Even more helpful was the number of Rx Response Twitter followers who re-tweeted Rx Response Tweets.

"Emergency managers and consumers are increasingly using social media during disasters and we want to be sure Rx Response stays ahead of the curve in using the latest tools to communicate with our stakeholders," said Rx Response's Erin Mullen.

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for priority deliveries could be arranged and connected distributors with open fueling stations along their routes. Fuel shortages also threatened pharmacies that were operating on generator power. Federal officials relied on Rx Response to learn which pharmacies were at risk of losing generator power.

While much attention was focused on sustaining retail pharmacy operations, federal officials were looking further up the supply chain to assess potential problems. One federal inquiry sought a status report on a key drug being used to treat patients impacted by the recent Meningitis outbreak. The request was relayed by Rx Response directly to the manufacturer, who reported no disruptions in the medicine's availability. In this instance Rx Response was able to connect the dots to ensure that federal resources were not diverted away from critical response efforts.

When federal officials activated the Emergency Prescription Assistance Program (EPAP) — allowing pharmacies to provide free prescriptions to citizens with no health insurance — Rx Response quickly disseminated the information to officials in the affected states of New Jersey and New York, as well as its members. HHS Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, RADM Nicole Lurie, MD, asked Rx Response to notify its retail pharmacy members that the federal government had relaxed Department of Justice anti-kickback regulations restricting the ability of pharmacies to provide prescriptions without charging co-pays.

"What we learned from our industry's response to Hurricane Sandy is that Rx Response has truly become an indispensable asset to federal and state officials during times of disaster," said PhRMA President and CEO John Castellani. "We take our responsibility to protect the bio-pharmaceutical supply chain very seriously and we'll continue to work with the government and our industry partners to help ensure the continued flow of medicine in future disasters."

John M. Gray, President and CEO of the Healthcare Distribution Management Association (HDMA), a key member of Rx Response, hailed Rx Response for its success in quickly getting information HDMA needed from government officials. "Before Sandy made landfall, we requested Rx Response's help in finding out how our members' delivery trucks could get credentialed so they could access restricted areas," said Gray. "In a disaster situation, fast response is critical and Rx Response facilitated rapid information exchange on our behalf during and after Sandy's landfall."

Gray said another important lesson learned from Hurricane Sandy was the value of Rx Response's ongoing outreach and partnership building activities during non-disaster periods. "There's no time after a disaster strikes to be introducing your capabilities to federal or state officials who are busy responding to the disaster," said Gray. "The fact that we had high level interactions between Rx Response and government officials following Sandy's landfall shows that the time we spend doing outreach and relationship building is critically important."

With an historic 2012 hurricane season now over, Rx Response leaders will continue assessing lessons learned from Hurricane Sandy while remaining alert and ready for the next disaster.

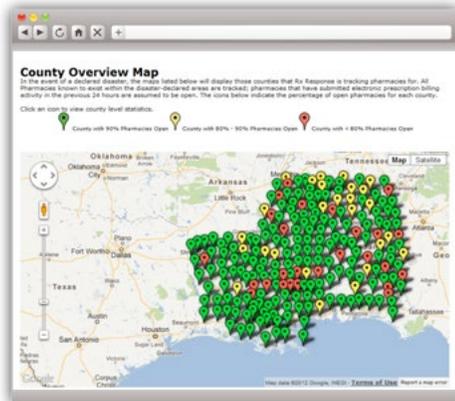


## Sandy Not the Only Headline Maker in Busy Hurricane Season as Isaac Triggers Rx Response Activation

Seven years to the day after Hurricane Katrina tore across coastal Louisiana and Mississippi, killing over 1,800 people, Hurricane Isaac battered the Gulf Coast with hurricane force winds and massive amounts of rain.

Rx Response, created in the aftermath of Katrina, elevated to its highest alert status, *Engaged*, to manage any impact to the bio-pharmaceutical supply system. Despite wide spread power outages that temporarily closed a number of pharmacies, and forced the evacuation of hospitals and nursing homes, no serious disruptions to the flow of medicine occurred.

Isaac also tested Rx Response's enhanced Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool (PSRT). The PSRT is an online tool that allows emergency managers and the public to readily locate open pharmacies in communities that have been impacted by severe emergencies ([www.rxresponse.org](http://www.rxresponse.org)). The tool was first developed by Rx Response in 2009 and the enhanced version reflects improvements made through a new Google platform and an innovative collaboration between Walgreens and Rx Response. (See sidebar story)



These Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool maps from Aug. 29<sup>th</sup> and Sept. 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012 demonstrate the rapid restoration of pharmacy services and the resilience of the pharmacy community in the face of the storm.

While Isaac ultimately had a minimal impact on the bio-pharmaceutical supply chain, the hurricane provided a good real world test of Rx Response's newest capabilities, which would be more strenuously tested later in the year by Hurricane Sandy. In addition to periodic situation reports provided to federal and state agencies, Rx Response maintained ongoing communications with members of the bio-pharmaceutical supply chain, positioning the program to respond rapidly if any obstacles arose to the flow of medicine that required a coordinated response from the industry.

## Collaboration with Walgreens Enhances Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool



A new enhancement to the Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool (PRST) made possible by Walgreens' collaboration with Rx Response, was perfectly timed to enable Rx Response to deploy a more robust PRST as Hurricane Isaac made landfall in Louisiana in August 2012. The enhanced PRST also proved helpful in Rx Response's activation for Hurricane Sandy in October.

Weeks before Isaac began as tropical depression number 9, Walgreens became the first U.S. pharmacy chain to provide status reports on its pharmacies directly to Rx Response.

"We applaud Walgreens for becoming the first pharmacy to work directly with Rx Response to enhance the value of our Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool," said Rx Response Director Erin Mullen. "Our relationship with Walgreens has given us a new level of visibility into what citizens impacted by a disaster will be asking of their community pharmacies."

Prior to Walgreens collaboration with Rx Response, the PRST relied only on electronic billing transmissions from pharmacies to insurance processing companies to determine if a pharmacy was open. When a pharmacy is transmitting electronic billing data, it is presumed open and Rx Response posts the pharmacy's location on an interactive [map](#) on the Rx Response website.

"Medications, especially for those with chronic conditions, can be one of the most important health care needs that are difficult to meet in the aftermath of a natural disaster," said Tim Belka, Walgreens' director of global security services. "By giving people a place to go for information and critical pharmacy or health care services during a time of crisis, Walgreens and Rx Response can help with disaster relief efforts for impacted communities. As a community health and daily living destination, our stores can also serve as a convenient and centralized aid station during crisis situations."

Mullen encourages other companies interested in participating in the PSRT to contact [admin@rxresponse.org](mailto:admin@rxresponse.org).

## Rx Response Tests Radiological Response Readiness in Mock Disaster



The realism of the Rx Response exercise was enhanced with media graphics shared with the participants as the disaster unfolded.

The frightening scenario seemed all too real to the participants in an Rx Response disaster training exercise held in June 2012. Mock news reports spoke of a crude nuclear device exploding in Philadelphia with an unknown numbers of casualties. In an eerie reminder of 9/11's sequence of attacks, a second detonation occurred a short time later in nearby Trenton with a third and final explosion in Newark.

In the densely populated area with numerous pharmacies and pharmaceutical manufacturing and distribution facilities, Rx Response officials moved quickly to assess the potential impact a real terrorist attack might have on the bio-pharmaceutical supply chain. In response to the mock attacks, a number of bio-pharmaceutical industry manufacturers, distributors and pharmacies practiced their disaster plans and how to monitor an attack's effects on employees and facilities in the impacted areas. Officials from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Pennsylvania Department of Health also participated, joining conference calls with the Rx Response Coordinating Body to participate in the two-way exchange of information that would be needed in such an event.

"I've been involved in a lot of disaster drills throughout my career and this exercise was the most realistic I'd ever experienced," said Rx Response Director Erin Mullen, RPh, PhD, CEM. "The more realistic an exercise is, the better able participants can imagine an actual crisis incident and develop the knowledge and skills required to effectively manage a real crisis."

Rx Response will continue to test its readiness and disaster response systems with more exercises planned for 2013 and beyond. Mullen encourages other Rx Response member companies interested in developing or testing existing disaster plans to contact Rx Response at [admin@rxresponse.org](mailto:admin@rxresponse.org).

## Rx Response Coordinating Body Member Profile



Lisa Schwartz

The Rx Response Coordinating Body (CB) is the operational arm of Rx Response that includes a representative from each sector of the bio-pharmaceutical supply system. The Coordinating Body convenes during emergencies to provide a coordinated response during disasters and meets quarterly to help set priorities for Rx Response.

To help introduce Rx Response stakeholders to Coordinating Body members, each issue of the Rx Response newsletter will now feature a Q&A session with a Coordinating Body member. The first member interviewed is Lisa Schwartz, Director of Management Affairs for the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA).

### **Q. What is the mission of NCPA?**

**A.** NCPA is the voice of America's independent pharmacists. There are two key member service components of NCPA. One is the advocacy side where our team works with our members to ensure that policy makers understand what's important to community pharmacists and the patients we serve. This involves visits with policy makers on Capitol Hill and in state capitals around the country. The other component of our organization is the NCPA Management Institute, and this is where I work. The Management Institute helps pharmacists not only be good healthcare providers but also good business owners.

### **Q. What role does NCPA play within Rx Response?**

**A.** For starters, we represent a portion of the supply chain that dispenses medicine directly to patients through our pharmacists. As a member of the Rx Response Coordinating Body, I bring the views of community pharmacists to the table. During disasters when Rx Response is engaged, I also share information about how our community pharmacies have been impacted by a disaster. In 2012, when Kentucky was hit by a string of deadly tornadoes, I was able to reach out to all of our independent pharmacies to determine if they were open or not. This enabled me to help Rx Response update their Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool, which tells the public which pharmacies have resumed serving the public after a major disaster. I was very pleased to be able to provide some really concrete assistance.

### **Q. How has Rx Response been a benefit to NCPA?**

**A.** We've learned a lot from our involvement with Rx Response that we've been able to share with our members to help them become better prepared for disasters. For example, one of the

important lessons I learned after participating in a Mock Disaster with Rx Response was that we need to help our pharmacists focus not only on disaster planning for their pharmacies but also for their families and the families of their employees. You can't run a community pharmacy very well without your employees.

Through our involvement with Rx Response, NCPA had the opportunity to work with the CDC on a project to better understand how community pharmacies can work with public health officials to address a major public health crisis.

**Q. What does NCPA do to promote Rx Response's mission with your members?**

**A.** We have done a lot of education with our members about Rx Response and its critical mission in helping to ensure the flow of medicine in a major disaster. We want our members to understand how vital their role is in getting medicine to patients when there is a major disaster. We just had Erin Mullen speak at our annual meeting and she was very well received. Since Erin is a former practicing pharmacist, she had a lot of credibility with our members who recognized that she has a real understanding of what it's like to work behind the pharmacy counter.

I recently wrote a lengthy article about my experience working as NCPA's liaison with Rx Response that appeared in the October issue of our monthly magazine, America's Pharmacist. My article is also available on the Rx Response website at <http://www.rxresponse.org/Newsroom/Documents/NCPA%20Preparedness%20Newsletter.pdf>.

Going forward, we'll continue to educate our members about the important work of Rx Response and the responsibility our members have in helping communities recover from a disaster.

**Active Flu Season Keeps Rx Response on Alert, Showcases Increased Role for Community Pharmacists in Flu Vaccinations**

As flu activity spiked in early January, and supplies of vaccine and Tamiflu became limited in some areas of the country, Rx Response moved from *Standby* to *Alert* status, carefully monitoring the situation, communicating with supply chain partners and fielding calls from state and federal officials. The jump in flu cases prompted a major push for vaccinations for those who had yet to receive a flu shot, focusing more attention on the growing role of community pharmacists in administering flu vaccines.

In response to the flu outbreak, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo issued an Executive Order expanding the ages for which

pharmacists can administer a flu vaccine. "The reliance on community pharmacies during this outbreak certainly seems to be on the rise," said Chris Krese, a spokesman for the National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS), an Rx Response Coordinating Body member.

In 2011-2012, about 22.3% of individuals who received a flu vaccine had it administered in a pharmacy or store. This growing trend arose in part from the 2008-2009 H1N1 pandemic, which dramatically changed the role of community pharmacists in helping America battle not only pandemics but seasonal flu. When the pandemic was over, community pharmacists had played a pivotal role in what was the largest vaccination campaign in human history.

Impressed by the response of community pharmacists during the pandemic, the CDC has been actively considering a broader role for community pharmacies in future pandemics. This attention has not gone unnoticed at NACDS and the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA), both of whom have stepped up efforts to help their members take on an increasing role in the vaccination against seasonal flu.

**Hurricane Andrew Anniversary Recalls Rx Response Director's Brush with Disaster**



2012 was not only a big year for hurricanes but also a big year for hurricane anniversaries. The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hurricane Andrew was marked in August 2012. At the time, it was the

most powerful hurricane ever to hit the U.S. and Hurricane Andrew's anniversary brought back many personal memories for Rx Response Director Erin Mullen. Mullen survived Andrew by hiding in a small closet of a friend's home in South Florida. She shared the harrowing experience along with some of the more humorous memories from Hurricane Andrew in a story published on the Rx Response website in August 2012. Mullen's full story can be read at <http://www.rxresponse.org/Newsroom/Pages/It-was-20-years-ago-today%E2%80%A6A60824-834.aspx>.

**Red Cross Launches Hurricane App for Smart Phones**

The American Red Cross launched its official Hurricane App just in time for the 2012 hurricane season, putting lifesaving information right in the hands of people who live in or who visit hurricane prone areas.



The free app, for use on both iPhone and Android platforms, gives instant access to local and real time information on what to do before, during and after hurricanes. The app also includes a number of features that allow people to monitor personalized weather alerts in locations where family and friends reside and to share information with others in their social networks who might also need it.

“This free Hurricane App puts personalized preparedness information in the pockets and purses of those who need it,” said Jack McMaster, President, Preparedness and Health and Safety Services at the American Red Cross. “We’re especially proud of the app’s social features that will help friends and families stay in touch during storms, reducing much of the fear and uncertainty for loved ones and property owners far away.”



People can access the new app from their mobile phones by calling “\*\*REDCROSS” (\*\*73327677) to download the app directly from the iTunes or Google Play app stores.

## Making the Rounds

Rx Response continues its active outreach throughout the emergency management and public health community with a host of presentations, briefings and panel discussions at key conferences and meetings throughout the U.S.

### Recent Rx Response Engagements:

#### FEMA’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference on “Building Resilience through Public-Private Partnerships

July 2012 — Rx Response Support Team Lead Emily Lord participated on a panel called “Partnering to Save Lives” which discussed the need to engage with private sector public health and medical capabilities well in advance of an emergency, and demonstrated how the government is collaborating with organizations to increase visibility of medical supply chains and develop proposed common operating picture/technology solutions.

#### NACDS Pharmacy & Technology Conference

Aug. 2012 — Rx Response Director Erin Mullen was a featured

speaker addressing “Public Health Emergencies: the increasing role of pharmacy care” to chain drug store executives in Denver, Colorado.

#### The Emergency Management Summit

Sept. 2012 — Erin Mullen presented Rx Response’s interactive Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool to delegates in Baltimore, MD.

#### NCPA Annual Convention

Oct. 2012 — Erin Mullen spoke to members of the National Community Pharmacists Association in San Diego, CA about preparing their families and pharmacies for disaster.

#### Department of Homeland Security’s Sector Coordinating Council/Government Coordinating Council Meeting

Oct. 2012 — Rx Response’s Erin Mullen and Emily Lord spoke at the Ashburn, VA meeting on public-private coordination in disaster response and the role of the Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool in helping to ensure the continued flow of medicine following a major disaster.

#### CDC Expert Panel on Access to Medicine During Emergencies

Dec. 2012 — Emily Lord participated on an expert panel convened by the CDC’s Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response. The event brought experts together to discuss the issues of access to medication before, during, and after disasters for people with chronic medical conditions.

#### International Disaster Conference and Expo

Jan. 2013 — Rx Response Director Erin Mullen was the featured speaker at this important annual conference which unites public and private sector professionals from around the world for discussions regarding policy, lessons learned, best practices, and forward thinking in emergency management.

#### Supply Chain Delivery Exercise

Jan. 2013 — Rx Response’s Emily Lord participated in a supply chain exercise funded by FEMA and organized by the Arlington County Office of Emergency Management. This was a partnership event between the Northern Virginia Emergency Resource System (NVERS), the All Hazards Consortium and The Infrastructure Security Partnership (TISP). The goal of this exercise was to work through remedies and to promote a local supply chain capacity-focused approach to disaster resource planning.

#### Rx Response Coalition Partners:

