



# Rx Response Report:

## Spring 2009 Update

### Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool Early Success Stories

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 many pharmacies. **Rx Response** officials deployed their reporting tool in concert with NCPDP and at the request of Kentucky public health officials.



#### Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool as used during the January 2009 Kentucky Ice Storms.

The Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool earned praise from Kentucky emergency management officials for its role in the disaster. "The 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."

The tool was activated again in response to the Southeast storms in April, when Georgia and Florida lost critical infrastructure due to flooding. Numerous counties in the affected region faced pharmacy closures and prompted deployment of the reporting tool with NCPDP and Georgia and Florida public health officials.

"The Kentucky ice storms and Southeast floods provided us with excellent opportunities to test the new system," said **Rx Response** Director Erin Mullen, R.Ph., Ph.D. "We were very pleased with the outcome and the excellent feedback we've received from the affected states' emergency management officials."

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

**Rx Response** has launched a powerful new tool for 2009. The Pharmacy Status Reporting Tool is a free, 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 Red Cross shelter managers 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 Drug Programs' (NCPDP) Emergency Preparedness Committee 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 retail pharmacies. By tapping into the data feed on a frequent basis,

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**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 asset possible."

## National Infrastructure Protection Plan Update Highlights Pre-Disaster Planning Role of Rx Response

After earning broad praise for its rapid response to hurricanes, ice storms and other disasters, **Rx Response** leaders are now working with key federal agencies to improve national preparedness by enhancing pre-disaster planning.

The Department of Homeland Security, in its recently released National Infrastructure Protection Plan, has updated a framework to facilitate pre-disaster planning and post-disaster response between the federal government and private industry, which owns and operates approximately 85% of the critical infrastructure in the United States. The heart of this coordination effort rests with 18 private sector councils that will liaise with government counterparts in critical areas such as healthcare, energy, transportation, water, food and agriculture. **Rx Response** Director Erin Mullen, R.Ph., Ph.D. will serve as a Co-Chairperson of the Healthcare Sector Coordinating Council.

"Because of Erin Mullen's leadership role on the Healthcare Sector Coordinating Council, the entire health care sector is today working more cohesively with our partners in the federal government to enhance America's overall preparedness," said Billy Tausin, President and CEO of PhRMA, a co-founder of **Rx Response**. "Enhancing pre-disaster planning will go a long way towards improving our ability to respond to future disasters."

Pharmaceutical manufacturers, distributors, and pharmacies interested in participating in the National Infrastructure Protection Program through Healthcare Sector Coordinating Council activities are encouraged to contact Erin Mullen at [emullen@rxresponse.org](mailto:emullen@rxresponse.org).

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## US declares public health emergency for swine flu



## Rx Response Elevates to Alert Status in Response to H1N1 Influenza Virus

With the first reported case of H1N1 influenza in the United States in late April, **Rx Response** began monitoring the situation and shortly thereafter elevated to Alert Status. Under Alert Status, **Rx Response** members began closely monitoring developing information regarding influenza cases detected in the United States and worked with local, state and federal health authorities to help ensure the continued efficient functioning of the nation's pharmaceutical supply chain.

**Rx Response** participated in conference calls with the Healthcare Sector Coordinating Council, which is part of the Department of Homeland Security's Critical Infrastructure/Key Resources efforts associated with the National Infrastructure Protection Plan. A key step taken by **Rx Response** was encouraging state emergency management officials to direct questions about pharmacy-level anti-viral supplies to appropriate federal authorities rather than asking local pharmacies directly for this information. This allowed pharmacies to focus on patient care, while the regulatory agency that was already collecting the pertinent data was able to provide the requested information.

In addition, **Rx Response's** Coordinating Body convened daily during this crisis and continues to actively monitor the situation. "This is **Rx Response's** first engagement in response to a potential pandemic influenza and we're very pleased with the processes we have put in place," said **Rx Response** Director, Erin Mullen, R.Ph., Ph.D. "Our previous state outreach to emergency managers and public health officials has provided us with the means to immediately communicate with these officials and act as a single point of contact for their questions pertaining to the entire pharmaceutical supply system. I believe our participation in the partnership between government agencies and private sector pharmaceutical supply companies has been very helpful during this crisis."