

Michigan emergency departments are better prepared to respond to disaster

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Emergency Departments across Michigan are better prepared to handle a disaster today than they were seven years ago, according to a Henry Ford Hospital study.

The study found that 84 percent of emergency departments said they are more prepared to handle a terrorist attack or natural disaster than they were in 2005.

They've also enhanced their preparedness efforts by adding decontamination rooms, stockpiling antidotes for [nerve gas](#) and cyanide, and storing more respiratory protection supplies.

At the same time, emergency departments acknowledged they could benefit from more disaster training, more equipment, and better coordination with local and regional emergency agencies.

The findings are being presented Monday at the American College of Emergency Physicians' annual meeting in Seattle.

Howard Klausner, M.D., a Henry Ford emergency medicine physician and the study's senior author, says people should interpret the findings with perspective.

"Hospitals think they're prepared, and on paper it might appear to be the case. But unless you've been through a real event, you just don't know," says Dr. Klausner. "Every time there's something in the news, hospitals wonder if that's something that could happen in their area and how they would respond. Compared to other parts of the country, the chance of a natural disaster happening in Michigan is very unlikely. However, preparedness is still very important."

The retrospective study analyzed differences in emergency preparedness based on responses to a 31-question survey sent to all Michigan emergency

departments in 2012 and 2005. In 2012, 99 of 136 emergency departments responded to the survey compared to 112 of 139 emergency departments in 2005.

Questions ranged from the number of patients requiring decontamination and availability of antidote kits for nerve gas and cyanide to skin protection types for staff and communication network participation.

Provided by Henry Ford Health System

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