

GET YOUR GO BAG: DEPLOYING OR VOLUNTEERING TO HELP IN DISASTERS

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DISCLOSURE

Walter Fava has no actual or potential conflict of interest, nor does he have any relevant financial interests associated with this presentation.

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PHARMACIST AND TECHNICIAN OBJECTIVES

- Describe typical requirements for deployment or travel to a disaster-stricken area
- List common concerns and challenges once you arrive to help
- Identify ways to get and stay involved in disaster preparedness

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IMPORTANCE

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) website, this year alone, there have been 27 named hurricanes, of which, there were

- 10 named Atlantic storms in September alone, five of which were active on September 14,
- The first time since 1971 to have so many storms active simultaneously

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IMPORTANCE (CONT.)

- There have been over 800 confirmed tornadoes in the US in 2020
- Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced in California, Washington, Oregon, and Colorado due to wildfires

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CHALLENGES OF DISASTER RELIEFWORK

Responders will be challenged

- Physically
- Mentally
- Emotionally
- Spiritually

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WHAT DID I SIGN UP FOR?

Disaster relief work is

- Heroic
- Ugly
- Dangerous

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AM I UP FOR THE CHALLENGE?

- Think about whether you are up for the challenge and whether your lifestyle and job will accommodate volunteering for disaster relief work
 - Personal health concerns
 - Family concerns
 - Employer concerns

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AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION QUESTION 1

- What type of natural disaster has happened most often in the US in 2020?
- A. Earthquakes
- B. Hurricanes
- C. Tornadoes

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REQUIREMENTS

- Appropriate training, equipment and resources
- Good physical shape to endure long hours and lack of sleep
- Mentally and emotionally well balanced
- Focused on providing healthcare services in the midst of extreme conditions
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team
- Patience
- Have a 'This is not about me' attitude

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TRAINING, EQUIPMENT, & RESOURCES

- Volunteering through organizations and agencies which provide disaster relief services will give you the following
 - Access to the appropriate training
 - Equipment
 - Resources you may need

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TRAINING, EQUIPMENT, & RESOURCES (CONT.)

Training will include

- Didactic modules
- Group drills
- Exercises to 'practice' responding to a natural disaster
- Familiarizing volunteers with the equipment and tools at their disposal during a disaster relief effort such as navigating the drug cache

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TRAINING, EQUIPMENT, & RESOURCES (CONT.)

Disaster relief organizations will also provide you a list of climate/season appropriate clothing to pack in your Go Bag as well as other essentials

- Your 'Go Bag' is the luggage you have packed ahead of time so you can leave on short notice
- Use a duffle bag on wheels to accommodate easier transport

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ADDITIONAL GO BAG TIPS

- Bring a lightweight backpack for mobility to keep valuables, medications, snacks, drinks with you
- Hands-free clip-on light
- Travel size sewing kit
- Toilet paper
- Notebook, pens, and pencils (for journaling, notes, etc...)
- Personal protective equipment (extra face masks, disposable gloves, face shields, hand sanitizer)

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HEALTHY BEHAVIORS

- Nutrition
- Sleep
- Mindfulness practice
- Exercise options (e.g. yoga if unable to run/limited opportunities d/t space/weather)
- Ability to stand for long hours and lift heavy boxes of supplies
- Personal resiliency practices

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MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY WELL BALANCED

- Ability to handle horrific scenes of loss, devastation and suffering
- Ability to deflect the anger from those you are trying to help

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KEEPING FOCUSED

- Providing pharmacy services in extreme conditions accurately and error-free as efficiently as possible

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WORKING INDEPENDENTLY AND AS PART OF A TEAM

- Pharmacists can expect to work shifts alone with no support help
- Multidisciplinary effort providing quality care

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PATIENCE

- Take deep breaths and stay calm in the midst of difficult dispensing conditions, personalities, and demands
- Providing pharmacy services with limited resources and no automation takes additional time

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THIS IS NOT ABOUT ME ATTITUDE

- Easy to complain
- Keep the right perspective
- Remember you are inconvenienced for a short period of time compared to the people for whom you are providing care

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DOMESTIC VERSUS INTERNATIONAL

- US and international natural disaster sites volunteers need to have a license in good standing in their own state
- Passport needed for international travel to disaster sites

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PHARMACY TECHNICIANS ROLE IN PATIENT CARE IN RESPONSE TO NATURAL DISASTERS

- Follow state laws and pharmacy policies
- Encourage patients to have an adequate supply of medications
- Help patients update their medication list

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PHARMACY TECHNICIANS ROLE IN PATIENT CARE IN RESPONSE TO NATURAL DISASTERS (CONT.)

- If an emergency is declared in your state, filling emergency prescriptions for a 7 to 30 day supply is allowed if a patient's prescriber or pharmacy cannot be reached
- Many states allow you to emergency fill Schedule III, IV, and V, during a state of emergency, but not Schedule II drugs
- For early refill insurance rejects, use override code '13'; this designates an override is needed due to a disaster

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GET YOUR HOUSE IN ORDER BEFORE YOU LEAVE

- Upcoming bills paid or arrange to have someone pay them during your absence
- Notify your credit card company you will be traveling to another state
- Have all of your legal affairs in order and accessible to your designated legal representative

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AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION QUESTION #2

- Thorough training prior to being deployed to a disaster site should include which of the following?
- A. How to use a compass
- B. Didactic modules, drills and practice group disaster response simulation exercises appropriate for your role as a healthcare provider
- C. How to use night vision goggles to work in the dark

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CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES

- Walking into the unknown so expect the unexpected
- Site unprepared
- Not all disciplines are on site
- Security
- Going 'Old School' due to lack of internet access
- Interacting with people of many different cultures
- Dealing with the anger people have from being displaced during a disaster

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EXPERIENCES DURING HURRICANES IKE AND GUSTAV

- Medical field station set up in a brand new equestrian center on the campus of Louisiana State University
- Arrived around 2am and had to have a functional pharmacy set up by 8 a.m.
- Pharmacy staff consisted of 6 pharmacists
- Paired up to work 8 hour shifts to keep the pharmacy open 24/7
- No cell phone reception, no WIFI, and no computers
- Meals Ready to Eat (MRE) – Red beans and rice

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RETURNING HOME AFTER YOUR DISASTER RELIEF EXPERIENCE

- It is normal to feel sadness, grief, anger, and anxiety over what you saw and experienced
 - Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD)
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/recovering-disasters>
 - Disaster Distress Helpline 1-800-985-5990
- https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/resilience_resources/support_documents/postdeploy/rbh_nmh05-0215.html
- Post-incident stress debriefing

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PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

- Connect with your personal social support system upon your return
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Co-workers
- Determine if your state has its own state-specific disaster behavioral health training that covers state specific deployment protocols, partners, and resources
- Find out if your employer offers convalescent leave for a few days upon your return

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WAYS TO GET AND STAY INVOLVED IN DISASTER RELIEF

- It is important to volunteer through an organization or agency which can provide training and resources
- Do not self deploy to disaster areas to offer help
- Many websites provide contact information to organizations and agencies responsible for coordinating disaster relief efforts

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AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

- Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA] (www.fema.gov)
- National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters [NVOAD] <https://www.nvoad.org/volunteer>
- American Red Cross (www.redcross.org)
- Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS]
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA]
- Churches

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STAYING INVOLVED

- State and local government emergency preparedness groups
- Consider using information from your journal post-deployment to write articles for publication describing your disaster relief experience
- Upon returning from your disaster relief tour of duty, consider doing a slide show presentation in an informal brown bag lunch setting for your coworkers
- Participate in continuing education and training related to disaster preparedness

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AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION QUESTION #3

- While ensuring patients have an adequate supply of medications during a declared state of disaster, early refills can be processed using insurance override code
- A. 21
- B. 13
- C. 10

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