

Identifying Emergency Preparedness Issues Faced by School Nutrition Programs and Readiness to Respond



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PURPOSE

To identify school nutrition directors' perception of the effectiveness of their emergency preparedness (EP) plan and their role in evaluating and implementing procedures to assure safe and nutritious food during an emergency.

METHOD

Phase I

- An expert panel of school nutrition professionals
 - explored common elements of emergency preparedness plans,
 - discussed the extent emergency preparedness plans were followed during emergencies,
 - identified methods to evaluate emergency preparedness plan effectiveness, and
 - identified types of training for emergency preparedness.

Phase II

- The expert panel results guided development of a survey to identify school nutrition directors' perception of their plan's effectiveness.
- A review panel of school nutrition professionals evaluated the survey and related documents.
- The survey was mailed to a random sample of 700 school nutrition directors representing the seven USDA regions.

RESULTS

- A total of 182 (26%) surveys was received.
- A majority (56.1%) of respondents reported more than 5 years tenure in their current position.
- All respondents reported having an EP plan.
- Two-thirds (66.5%) use the district plan.
- One-third (33%) maintain a separate school nutrition plan.
- The emergency preparedness plans have most often been utilized for lockdowns (51.4%) and power failures (41.3%).

- Seventy percent (70%) of respondents were able to use their plan as written or with modifications prompted by a prior emergency.
- A majority (52.8%) of respondents indicated that they were unaware of any barriers or that there were no major barriers to their current emergency preparedness plan.
- The most often cited (16%) challenge was lack of staff to implement the plan.
- The elements of an emergency preparedness plan that were most often not included were recovery plans (29.7%), security provisions for deliveries (28.0%), and information about funding and other resources for emergencies (19.8%).
- Modification to the roles and responsibilities of the SN director, managers, and staff (31.9%) was the revision most often needed after the EP plan had been implemented.
- Respondents contributed to the district/school nutrition program evaluation of the emergency preparedness plan through advice and suggestions (54.5%), and by serving on a committee to address the issues (40.4%).
- A majority (63.9%) of respondents perceived their current plan as effective for all emergencies.
- Respondents agree/somewhat agree that they, school nutrition staff (56.2%), and district staff (53.3%) are adequately trained.
- The major sources of emergency preparedness information utilized were the school district (92.1%), local health department (47.8%), and the state agency (46.1%).
- Types of training needed for EP included: food safety/sanitation (83.1%), maintaining foodservice operations during emergencies (76.2%), emergency preparedness drills (72.1%), and HACCP (70.9%).

SCHOOL NUTRITION DIRECTORS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

PERCEPTION	AGREE/SOMEWHAT AGREE
All school nutrition programs should have their own emergency preparedness plan.	74.4%
The school nutrition program is included in the school district's emergency preparedness communications, preparations, and drills.	65.1%
The current school nutrition program's/district's emergency preparedness plan can be used effectively in all emergency situations.	63.9%
Our school nutrition program/school district has adequate emergency supplies and resources.	54.1%
Our school nutrition program's/school district's emergency preparedness plan is adequately funded.	28.8%

INCLUSION OF THE SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM IN DISTRICT EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLANS

METHOD OF INCLUSION	NUMBER	PERCENT
The school nutrition director/staff participate in school drills.	102	57.0
The school nutrition program emergency preparedness plan is a part of the school district emergency preparedness plan.	86	48.0
The school nutrition director/staff participate in school district emergency preparedness planning.	70	39.1
An employee of the school nutrition department is a member of the school district emergency preparedness team.	48	26.8
The school district does not provide training.	36	20.1
The school nutrition program is not included in the district emergency preparedness plan.	35	19.6

ELEMENTS INCLUDED IN SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS'/SCHOOL DISTRICTS' EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLANS

ELEMENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
Facility evacuation exit routes	141	77.5
Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)	140	76.9
Contact information needed by district and other emergency responders	129	70.9
Roles and responsibilities of SN directors, managers, and staff	125	68.7
School district designate schools as emergency shelters	120	65.9
Contact information needed by SN director/emergency responder	117	64.3
Guidelines for contact with the media/parents/public	106	58.2
Communication provisions [use of radio and mobile phones]	106	58.2
Elements related to a specific type of emergency [i.e., tornado, hurricane, etc.]	98	53.8
Alternative plans to continue SN program operations	96	52.7

APPLICATIONS

- Results of the study provided baseline information for assessment of school nutrition emergency preparedness
- Information from the study can be used to direct the development of resources and training materials to enhance school nutrition professionals' ability to respond to a variety of emergency situations