

Veterans Health Administration's Emergency Management Program in Action

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The US Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration (VHA), operates 153 medical centers and more than 870 outpatient clinics organized within 21 regional networks. Its mission is to serve the needs of America's military veterans by providing primary care, specialized care, and related medical and social support services through the nation's largest integrated health care system.

VHA has emergency management responsibilities under several federal programs, as well as those that are inherent to its operation of a national health care delivery system. The national contingency missions are to provide the Department of Defense with a backup system for returning military casualties from overseas theaters of war and to assist the Department of Health and Human Services with Emergency Support Function 8, Public Health and Medical Services, which includes the local area coordination of the participating private sector hospitals in the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS).

The photos included in the cover collage depict different components of VHA's comprehensive emergency management program. Two pictures capture mass casualty decontamination training in Little Rock, AR, and in Indianapolis, IN. Other photos illustrate patient reception operations during Hurricane Rita, in which patients were evacuated from threatened health care facilities through the NDMS system to Dallas, TX, and Oklahoma City, OK.

Photo credits: Upper left (decon), Mark St Marie, national decon program manager; upper right (gurney with pointing man), Nancy Gray, senior photographer; bottom left (people/yellow tape), Thomas Schumacher, radiation safety officer; bottom right (stacked patients), CMSgt Lloyd Smithson, command chief master sergeant, 137th Airlift Wing, Oklahoma Air National Guard.

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