

Personal disaster preparedness

January 22 2009

A recent survey by Medical College of Wisconsin researchers of over 1,800 patients seen in the Froedtert Hospital Emergency Department revealed that Metro Milwaukee residents may not personally be as well prepared for disasters as the rest of the country.

Survey results will be presented at the National Association of Emergency Medical Service Physicians meeting in Jacksonville, Fla., January 22, 2009.

The purpose of the survey was to assess personal preparedness for a disaster. The researchers used the Public Readiness Index (PRI), a validated survey consisting of ten questions developed by the Council for Excellence in Government.

The average PRI Score for the Milwaukee area respondents was 2.9. The national average was 4.1. This was a phone survey of a representative sample of US residents.

Only 37 percent of the Milwaukee respondents had taken a first-aid course. Twenty-nine percent had prepared a home disaster kit, 25 percent had a plan for locating family members in a disaster, and only 15 percent had volunteered to help prepare for or respond to a major emergency.

"These results can be used to better focus community efforts to improve personal preparedness," said Medical College emergency medicine resident and lead researcher Steven Zils, M.D.

Milwaukee respondents were English-speaking, between 18 and 89 years old, with an average age of 42. Forty-five percent were white, 44 percent were African American, and 51 percent were retired or unemployed. Those with children tended to be better prepared. Education, but not income, also appeared to improve the degree of disaster preparedness.

Those with children in school had a higher average PRI score (3.3) compared with those without children (2.7). Seventy-nine percent of participants with children said their child's school or day care had a written plan for how to respond to emergencies, but only 57 percent had received information about the plan. Those with a high school education or less had a lower PRI (2.7) compared with those with some college education or more (3.2).

Source: Medical College of Wisconsin

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