

# A risk management framework improves health systems' resilience to high-impact weather

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According to a new study by the American Meteorological Society (AMS) Policy Program, a risk management framework can improve the resilience of healthcare facilities and services to high-impact weather such as tornadoes and hurricanes. The report is based on a recent AMS Policy Program workshop, *A Prescription for the 21st Century: Improving Resilience to High-Impact Weather for Healthcare Facilities and Services*, held in Washington, DC in October 2013.

The purpose of the study was to explore methods for improving the resilience of the health system. The report outlines a process for reducing the structural and operational risks that healthcare facilities often face. The study presents a systematic strategy for improving resilience through a three-step process that first seeks to understand risks, then addresses the vulnerabilities of health facilities, and finally prepares for the continuity of health services in the event of disruptions.

The AMS Policy Program workshop included many diverse and engaged parties. The insurance sector and healthcare accreditors represented the stakeholders who assess risk. Those who plan and construct hospitals were represented by land developers, building engineers, and urban designers. Discussions on the continuity of healthcare services addressed pharmaceutical supplies, health IT, and clinical services.

"Two of our key findings involve new concepts," Shalini Mohleji, Policy

Fellow at the AMS Policy Program and director of the study, said. "First, resilience can be increased through successful risk management, and second, redundant systems promote efficacy, not inefficiency."

Healthcare facilities and services provide a key foundation for a thriving community. Therefore, ensuring their resilience to high-impact weather is critical. High-impact weather events present a challenge in that they disrupt health facilities and services and decrease the ability to provide healthcare at a time when a community's needs increase due to injuries and illness associated with the event. As more communities will emerge in areas vulnerable to high-impact weather, the need will grow for resilient healthcare facilities and services.

"Our health facilities are too vulnerable to weather and climate events. We need to protect them more effectively and a comprehensive framework to assess and manage risk can help do that." said Paul Higgins, Director of the AMS Policy Program.

**More information:** The full report is available at the AMS Policy Program website at [www.ametsoc.org/hfs](http://www.ametsoc.org/hfs)

Provided by American Meteorological Society

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