

Lessons Learned From Hurricanes

After hurricanes Katrina and Rita, many facilities are evaluating their emergency response plans. While most of the media has focused on what went wrong, let's take a moment to focus on what went right:

- Over 90% of the people evacuated when told to do so.
- Most people took water, food, and other supplies with them.
- Many businesses had a plan for reconnecting with employees, often through the Internet or phone lists.
- Never before have we seen such an outpouring of pooled resources...organizations across the country opening their doors for others, sharing resources.
- Many facilities had great success in e-mailing the disaster plan, important telephone numbers, and instructions. This made their evacuation and recovery efforts much smoother. Many facilities posted instructions on their web site.
- Early recognition that even after the hurricane had passed and the levees broke, that the danger was not over. Threat of disease was quickly acknowledged and addressed.
- Facilities that banked with a national bank or a bank with a networked ATM still had access to funds during emergency operations.

Dealing with natural disasters is always complex and plans rarely go exactly as written. However, with a well thought out recovery plan, the opportunity to stay in business and limit the losses significantly increases. Let's learn from our mistakes, but let's also learn from and appreciate our successes.