

# CARING

June 2008  
Vol. XXVII, No. 6  
\$5.00



## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS: Thinking about the Unthinkable

*Employees of Heartland Home Health Care & Hospice  
show what to do when a tornado comes calling*

Earn 1.5 CE Credits



See Page 26 for Details

# Better Safe than Sorry: Using Your Web Site to Promote Disaster Preparedness

By Merrily Orsini



Disaster preparedness is something that frail people have to be even more prepared for than the robust community member. From medical to mobility issues, as a home health agency, you can really have a positive impact for your clients and your clients' families.

A common theme of my regular articles is how you can use your Web site and the Internet as a communication tool for your agency. Believe it or not, disaster preparedness and your Web site can go hand in hand. Being proactive with your clients and referral sources will get them thinking ahead of time, which is the biggest part of success for a disaster plan. The focus of this article is how you can use your Web site and other electronic communication tools to get your clients and referral sources ready for any natural or manmade disaster.

The first step in any plan is to do your research. You know your area better than anyone. Make certain to only include information that relates to natural disasters that can happen in your area. For instance, it doesn't really make sense to have tornado planning in Southern California. So, depending on where you are in the country, make the information relevant. Use the following ideas to proactively use your agency Web site to become a useful disaster preparedness guide, and a helpful resource:

- 1) Create an information page – Call it your Local Disaster Preparedness Resource and add it to your Web site under a resource section or create a button on your home page that links directly to it. On this information page list local resources (where applicable) such as:
  - a. NOAA weather radio – Provides early warning with an alarm.
  - b. Local weather and television station Web sites – Chances are in most natural disasters power will be out and many people will use laptops to access information on the Internet. Having that information in one convenient location on your Web site will be a great tool.
  - c. Post a disaster checklist – Create it in a format that your clients and referral sources can download and fill out. Make sure to include a section on medical needs (prescription medications and doctor information) and emergency contacts.
  - d. Ability Self-Assessment – This is a great tool to offer for the adult children of any elderly clients. It will help them determine exactly what to do for their parent or loved one in the event of a disaster and allow them to make prior arrangements.
  - e. Breaking Disaster News – If you have the human resources, make sure someone from your agency can post breaking news in the hours after a disaster. Again, pulling information into one place will be invaluable for your clients and their families.
- 2) Promote the information – Once you have the information available on your Web site, you have to spread the word. Here are a few ideas that are inexpensive and effective:
  - a. Newsletter – Include a paragraph about the information page and disaster preparedness in your next e-newsletter. Include the link to your resource page.
  - b. Email – Send out an email to your client and referral source database informing them of the information and what a good idea it is to prepare ahead of time.
  - c. Refrigerator magnet – Promotional items such as magnets are very easy and inexpensive to produce. Create a magnet with the Web site address of your disaster page and mail it out to your clients and referral sources.
- 3) Host a free Webinar, at least once a year – Consider hosting a free Webinar as an online course for disaster preparedness. Go through checklists, conversations that should occur, and other preparatory exercises. Make

sure to also have downloads of all pertinent documents such as checklists and other information to accompany the Webinar. This is a great tool to not only help out the community, but also to gain awareness of your agency. Promote the Webinar at local senior homes, activity centers, churches, hospitals, and out-patient facilities. Remember, time and confusion are the biggest enemies in a disaster situation for frail people and their families. The clearer you can make your information and the more you can consolidate it in one place the better. Use your influence in the community to promote this information and awareness via your Web site and other electronic tools outlined in this article. We hope that neither you nor your clients ever have to use it, but better safe than sorry!

**About the Author:** *Merrily Orsini, MSSW, is managing director of corecubed, an integrated marketing communications company that specializes in home care and home health industries. Merrily has been active in internet marketing since 1990. She is an 18-year veteran of the private duty industry and currently serves on the Advisory Board of the Private Duty Homecare Association of America.*

## LIST OF ADVERTISERS

|                                      |                    |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| CareVoyant .....                     | inside front cover |
| Cerner BeyondNow.....                | 51                 |
| Delta Health Technologies .....      | 60, 61             |
| Financial Management Conference..... | 52                 |
| Glatfelter Insurance Group .....     | 23                 |
| HEALTHCAREfirst.....                 | back cover         |
| HealthMEDX.....                      | inside back cover  |
| Homecare Homebase.....               | 49                 |
| Hopkins Medical.....                 | 24, 57             |
| Hospice Pharmacia .....              | 19                 |
| Hospice Management Resources.....    | 29                 |
| Lewis Computer Service, Inc.....     | 2                  |
| NAHC's Annual Meeting .....          | 44, 45             |
| NAHC and GU's workforce survey.....  | 55                 |
| Outcome Concept Systems, Inc.....    | 43                 |
| Pearce Financial Group.....          | 63                 |
| Progesa.....                         | 47                 |
| Provista .....                       | 13                 |
| Santrax.....                         | 1                  |
| Smith, Bell, & Thompson .....        | 39                 |
| Robert L. Steinberg .....            | 62                 |
| Thornberry, Ltd. ....                | 5                  |

The National Association for Home Care & Hospice has partnered with Georgetown University to better understand the workforce needs of our members, including:

- Hiring US workers
- Providing access to care for patients in areas with nursing shortages
- Hiring immigrant workers
- Potential policies that could improve the recruitment and hiring of foreign workers

Please help with our research efforts by answering our short survey (10 minutes) about your workforce needs. The survey is academic and anonymous, you will never be identified.

[www.nahc.org/workforce](http://www.nahc.org/workforce)



**Georgetown**  
UNIVERSITY