



Registries: An Emergency Planning Tool

Registries

A registry is a voluntary database of individuals who meet the eligibility requirements for receiving additional emergency response services based on specific needs, the criteria for which should be established by the territorial, tribal, state, or local jurisdiction. Individuals interested in participating in a registry are often individuals with functional or special medical needs and may require additional assistance during emergencies or disasters.

Potential Uses for Registries

Registries can be a useful tool to help emergency planners strategically target and deploy resources, transportation assistance, and emergency services to a defined population in a specific geographic area. This is especially important for those individuals in need of urgent medical attention either due to a disruption in regular provider services or due to reliance on electrically powered medical equipment. In addition, it is possible for a registry to be effective without serving all needs in a community. For example, a state or county might focus its registry program on providing targeted communication or on meeting the needs of individuals who will require para-transit services during an evacuation. When used properly, a registry can become an integral part of a larger emergency management strategy. The utility of a registry is further enhanced when its geographic data is merged with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and other mapping software. Although there are currently no national registries, there are a number of successful efforts at the state and county levels.

Implementation of Registries

State, territorial, tribal, and local governments should have an informed estimate of the numbers and types of at-risk or special needs individuals residing in their community. Emergency planners should base their assessments on estimates and information collected from multiple relevant sources wherein at-risk individuals may be represented, such as:

- U.S. Census Data
- Social Services Listings (dialysis centers, Meals on Wheels, etc.)
- Para-transit Providers and Durable Medical Goods Suppliers
- Bureau of Motor Vehicles (accessible parking permit holders)
- Health Departments (territorial, tribal, state, or local as applicable)
- Utility Providers (priority lists for power-dependent individuals)
- Congregate Settings (group homes, hospices, residential schools, nursing homes, etc.)
- Community Based Organizations (social service organizations serving at-risk individuals)
- Faith Based Organizations (can help identify and reach out to members with functional or medical needs)

Once an assessment of the community has been done and the need for a registry has been identified, the state territory, tribe, or local government should consider how it will:

- **Use the registry.** Will the registry be used as a targeted communication tool or as a tool for locating at-risk individuals before, during, and after an emergency incident? The intended use of the registry will greatly impact the breadth and depth of the information that is collected and regularly updated.
- **Educate** the public, community and faith-based organizations, and potential registry candidates about the purpose, limitations, and potential uses of the registry. Particular attention should be given to both the value of participation and the circumstances under which registry information will be shared.
- **Secure funding** for staff and costs related to developing and maintaining the registry. To be effective, a registry will need not only initial but sustained funding.

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Implementation of Registries (continued)

- **Recruit and enroll participants for the registry.** Successful state and county registries have utilized a mixture of methods including having individuals sign up online, through the mail, over the phone using local 211 services, and in person at local government social service offices. It is also important to make registry documents and information available in multiple languages and formats (Braille, large print, etc.).
- **Maintain and operate the registry.** To be effective, registries should contain up to date contact/emergency contact information, as well as information on the location and functional needs of participants. Many state and county registries perform a yearly update (by phone, email, or mail) or require participants to re-register as a way of keeping participant information as current as possible. It is also important for state and county registry officials to educate and collaborate with emergency management staff in order to facilitate the coordinated implementation of a registry in the planning, response, and recovery efforts.

Challenges and Limitations to Registry Implementation

Designing and implementing a registry is a complex process that includes elements of funding, administration, outreach, recruitment, enrollment, disclaimers, education, data management, and response force commitments. Outside of the planning, logistics, and operational obstacles, other challenges and limitations exist such as:

- Eligible participants may not enroll due to concerns regarding the privacy and protection of their medical and personal information.
- Potential enrollees may not believe they have a need for assistance.
- Registries do not identify every individual who may need assistance during an emergency.
- Registry participants may believe that participation is a replacement to personal preparedness.

In order to ameliorate some of these challenges and limitations, registry officials may consider:

- Working with relevant stakeholders like home health care agencies, durable medical goods suppliers, and national programs like Meals on Wheels to help educate potential enrollees about the benefits of registry participation.
- Targeted messaging around both the potential uses of personal information and the security provisions and precautions in place to ensure personal privacy.
- Implementing a specific system or process that clearly communicates the limitations of liability, the limitations in service that may occur under various emergency situations, and that a registry program should be used to supplement, not to replace, personal preparedness plans.

Examples of State and County Registries

Brevard County Office of Emergency Operations Center, Special Needs Program:

http://www.brevardcounty.us/EOC/special_needs.cfm

Fairfax County Special Needs Registry: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/specialneeds/>

Linn County Special Needs Registration: http://www.linncounty.org/department.asp?Page_Id=398&Dept_Id=12

Utah Special Needs Registry: <http://www.specialneedsutah.org/>