



ENGAGE
WEBINAR SERIES

CMS Emergency Preparedness Requirements

with Billy Kinch, MHA, HACP-PE

Center for Improvement in Healthcare Quality (CIHQ) Accreditation

provides accreditation programs and regulatory guidance to healthcare organizations across the United States, supporting quality improvement, compliance, and patient safety initiatives.



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Senior Facility Specialist
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- William (Billy) Kinch has worked at CIHQ since 2014
- He is responsible for conducting CMS accreditation surveys and inspecting healthcare compliance to the Care Environment (CE), including the Life Safety Code, and Emergency Preparedness (EP) standards
- Billy helped develop CIHQ's Healthcare Accreditation Certified Professional in the Physical Environment (HACP-PE) certification program
- He has worked in healthcare for over 20 years
- Prior to joining CIHQ, he served as the Safety Officer and Disaster Preparedness Coordinator in a hospital where his duties included maintaining compliance to regulations related to the Physical Environment, Life Safety, Emergency Preparedness, OSHA, EPA, and other safety/security regulations
- Billy has a Master's in Healthcare Administration and a Bachelor's in Education
- His combined education and experience allow him to demonstrate to his colleagues, hospital leadership, and Quality/Safety administrators that he understands the where, why, and how facilities meet or exceed CMS standards

CMS Emergency Preparedness Requirements

Providing healthcare professionals with the knowledge and practical guidance needed to implement effective, CMS-compliant emergency preparedness programs.

About This Webinar

Emergency preparedness in healthcare requires more than regulatory compliance. Organizations must develop coordinated, practical, and sustainable plans that prepare teams to respond effectively during real-world emergencies and disasters. This session explores key emergency preparedness requirements, common compliance gaps, and actionable strategies organizations can implement to strengthen readiness and response capabilities.

During this webinar, participants will:

- Review emergency preparedness regulatory requirements
- Understand the role of healthcare coalitions during disaster response
- Identify common compliance gaps in emergency preparedness planning
- Explore practical implementation strategies for disaster readiness
- Review tools and resources to strengthen emergency operations planning

Understanding Emergency Preparedness Requirements

Healthcare organizations are required to maintain comprehensive emergency preparedness programs designed to protect patients, staff, and operations during emergencies and disasters. CMS emergency preparedness standards focus on ensuring organizations can respond effectively to a wide range of situations, including utility failures, severe weather events, fire system failures, infectious disease outbreaks, and community disasters.

Emergency preparedness programs should include clear policies, communication strategies, staff education, testing procedures, and coordination with external response agencies.

One common area of confusion involves alternate source requirements during failures involving fire alarm, detection, and suppression systems. While organizations often reference emergency generators as backup support, generators do not replace suppression system functionality. In these situations, organizations must implement a fire watch process to maintain safety compliance and monitoring responsibilities.

Key Takeaway

Emergency preparedness is not simply about regulatory compliance. Effective programs focus on operational readiness, staff response, patient safety, and coordinated community support during emergencies.

Common Compliance Gaps

Fire Alarm, Detection, and Suppression System Failures

A common compliance gap involves alternate source planning during failures involving fire alarm, detection, and suppression systems. While emergency generators may support alarm and detection systems, they do not replace suppression system functionality.

When these systems fail, organizations must implement a fire watch process to maintain safety compliance and ongoing monitoring responsibilities.

Key Takeaway

A fire watch process is the appropriate operational response when fire alarm, detection, and suppression systems are compromised.

The Role of Healthcare Coalitions

Hospitals are not alone in disaster response efforts. Healthcare Coalitions bring together hospitals, emergency response agencies, and community partners to coordinate planning and response activities during emergencies and disasters.

Participation in Healthcare Coalitions plays a critical role in strengthening regional preparedness, communication, and resource coordination.

Building an Effective Emergency Preparedness Program

While organizations hope to never encounter a disaster situation, preparedness is essential to maintaining patient safety and operational continuity. Effective emergency preparedness programs require ongoing assessment, staff education, planning, and testing.

The Four Components of an Emergency Preparedness Program

Effective emergency preparedness programs are built around four essential components that work together to support organizational readiness and response efforts.

Component	Purpose
1. Disaster Plan	Defines the organization's overall emergency response structure
2. Policies and Procedures	Guides operational actions during emergencies
3. Communication Plan	Establishes internal and external communication processes
4. Training and Testing Plan	Ensures staff readiness through education and drills

Reflection Questions:

1. Has your organization assigned emergency preparedness responsibilities as an “other duty assigned” role?
 YES NO
2. Does your organization approach emergency preparedness simply to meet regulatory standards, or to ensure true readiness in the event of an actual emergency response?

Next Steps

A disaster preparedness plan should function as a living document. Successful organizations continually evaluate their plans and identify opportunities for improvement based on changes in staffing, community needs, environmental risks, and operational experiences.

Organizations should:

- Regularly assess emergency preparedness plans
- Update strategies and procedures
- Provide ongoing staff education
- Conduct drills and testing exercises
- Evaluate performance and opportunities for improvement

Tools and Resources

1. [Emergency Preparedness Policy](#)
2. [Emergency Operations Plan – Test Critique Form](#)
3. [Hazard Vulnerability Analysis](#)
4. [CIHQ Accreditation Resources](#)

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CMS Emergency Preparedness Requirements

Date: May 26, 2026

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First Name: _____	Last Name: _____
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1. There are approximately _____ number of employees in our organization.

2. What is one area of your emergency preparedness program that could be strengthened to better support staff, patient safety, or organizational response efforts?

3. For me, the most valuable idea I learned and intend to use is:

4. What I would tell others about the quality of the speakers and value of the content:

5. Presentation improvements I would suggest:

6. On a scale of 1 – 5, this presentation: (Met My Expectations) 5 4 3 2 1 (Did Not)

Please where applicable:

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