

# PREPTalks

New perspectives for emergency managers



## Triage, Ethics, and Operations: Healthcare Emergency Preparedness and Response

Dr. Sheri Fink

## Agenda

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Introductions (5 minutes)
Watch the PrepTalks (20 minutes)
Discussion (30 minutes)

## Introduction



- Dr. Fink is the author of [Five Days at Memorial: Life and Death in a Storm-Ravaged Hospital](#) about a New Orleans hospital after Hurricane Katrina
- Her latest story, [Lost in the Storm](#), tracks the Dailey family's attempts to be rescued during Hurricane Harvey in Texas
- Dr. Fink is a former relief worker in disaster and conflict zones, and received her M.D. and Ph.D. from Stanford University.

# Watch the PrepTalk

<https://www.fema.gov/blog/preptalks-dr-sheri-fink-healthcare-emergency-preparedness-and-response>

## Topics

- Prioritizing Resources For the Greatest Good
- Implementing Decisions

## Topic 1: Prioritizing Resources For the Greatest Good

- **The National Response Framework** defines situational awareness as "the ability to identify, process, and comprehend the critical information about an incident"
- Effective situational awareness requires ongoing monitoring and re-assessment to support optimal decision-making and allocation of resources

### Triage

- Sorting and allocating treatment to patients according to a system of priorities designed to maximize the number of survivors or other outcomes such as years of life
- The assigning of priority order to projects on the basis of where funds and other resources can be best used, are most needed, or are most likely to achieve success

*Modified from: [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/triage](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/triage)*

How we choose who gets the resources ... is going to affect the outcome.  
Even the question of who gets to make that choice has ethical dimensions.

– Dr. Sheri Fink

## Topic 1: Prioritizing Resources For the Greatest Good

- Interdependencies
  - Decisions include both the positive action, but also the consequential effect of closing off, or crowding out other opportunities
- Scale
  - Large scale disasters are made up of a series of smaller scale disasters
- Decision-making
  - Past experiences and assumptions can influence decision makers

The public can handle it. Be as transparent as possible. You need the public as your partner.

– Dr. Sheri Fink

## Topic 1: Prioritizing Resources For the Greatest Good



1. What are the conditions during a disaster that lead to difficulty in making the best possible decisions? What are ways to address these challenges
2. Is there a process to reassess decisions, to examine if information has changed, if circumstances have changed, or if resources have changed—both increases and degradation?
3. How can you guard against groupthink — the tendency to agree with the group— to be sure you are examining all options?
4. How will you maintain situational awareness during the event?

## Topic 1: Prioritizing Resources For the Greatest Good



5. Do healthcare providers in your jurisdiction have triage policies? How can emergency managers and healthcare providers learn from each other?
6. How can the concept of standards of care be applied to emergency management?
7. How can you involve the public in the conversation?



## Topic 2: Implementing Decisions

- Communications
  - Cornerstone of executing a plan
  - Includes communications with the public and among the emergency management community
- Equipment and Human Capital
  - Need typically overwhelms available resources in disasters
  - Estimate the equipment and people you may need in advance
  - Strengthen relationships with the community and volunteer organizations to surge equipment and personnel during a disaster
- Power
  - Where the power fails, even greater resources will be needed to accomplish routine tasks

## Topic 2: Implementing Decisions

### Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs)

- Central link between the public and responders during a disaster
- Residents reach PSAPs by dialing 9-1-1
- Operated and funded by local jurisdictions, cities and counties
- PSAPs need to flex during disasters
  - Next generation technology allows PSAPs to transfer calls outside a disaster zone when call takers are overwhelmed or infrastructure is destroyed

Throughout the U.S. the legacy forty-year-old 9-1-1 solution cannot support the needs of advanced communication technologies. Public expectations are changing, and new technology will afford public safety the opportunity to provide more effective emergency response.

– Task Force on Optimal Public Safety Answering Point Architecture

## Topic 2: Implementing Decisions



1. Is your jurisdiction's 9-1-1 service is the older analog system or upgraded with next generation technology? What steps are in place to upgrade the system and ensure adequate staffing in emergencies?
2. What changes are needed in your jurisdiction to ensure greater efficiency in 9-1-1 operations?
3. How is your jurisdiction using social media to improve situational awareness, to address misinformation, and to communicate with the public? Under what conditions would your jurisdiction begin to respond to life threatening situations reported on social media?
4. If your jurisdiction is on an analog system, what is the plan if your primary and back-up systems fail during a disaster?
5. How is your jurisdiction using volunteer resources and equipment (e.g., boats, high water vehicles, amateur radio operators)?
6. Review your jurisdiction's EOP from the mindset of not having electricity. What assumptions have you made in your EOP that would be different without power?
7. Review past performances to determine weak links in executing your EOP. Are emergency support functions adequately integrated? How do your Emergency Operations Center (EOC) communications support or impede this collaboration? What community functions are not sufficiently represented in the planning process, to include PSAPs and volunteer programs?

PrepTalks. New Perspectives for Emergency Managers.

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