

# PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS (PHEP) PROGRAM

## STORIES FROM THE FIELD



## EXTREME FLOODING IN COLORADO

In September 2013, heavy rains caused extreme flooding in 18 counties in Colorado. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration declared the event a 1,000-year rainfall event—1,882 structures were destroyed, and 16,000 other structures damaged, including multiple healthcare facilities in the affected counties.

Local communities were prepared for this devastating event as a result of PHEP investments made by the Colorado Department of Public Health and

Environment (CDPHE). The state health department used PHEP funds to help local health departments plan for and respond to disasters by instituting emergency management structures capable of leading or supporting public health responses. The state public health department offered guidance, templates, and training to aid local healthcare organizations in drafting their disaster plans. The local health departments reviewed these plans and offered additional trainings and exercises to reinforce specific topics.



## THE INCIDENT

In September 2013, heavy rains caused extreme flooding in 18 Colorado counties.



## THE RESPONSE

Previous PHEP investments enabled CDPHE to help local health departments plan for and respond to disasters in their communities. The local health departments successfully evacuated and provided ongoing care for more than 500 long-term care facility residents, including 75 with supplemental oxygen needs and 25 dialysis patients.



## THE OUTCOMES

Ensured the continuity of care for people with chronic health conditions during an emergency.

Because of these PHEP-funded plans and exercises, local health departments successfully coordinated evacuations in five healthcare facilities during the September 2013 flooding. They transported more than 500 long-term care facility residents to destination facilities that were prepared to provide an equivalent level of care for the residents as their original facility. Specifically, they were able to transport and provide ongoing care for 75 people with supplemental oxygen requirements and 25 dialysis patients.

Addressing the communication gaps and planning for safe and consistent evacuation of healthcare facilities during an emergency ensured the continuity of care for people with chronic health conditions during the September 2013 flooding in Colorado.



CDC's Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) cooperative agreement program is a critical source of funding, guidance, and technical assistance for state, local, tribal, and territorial public health departments to strengthen their public health preparedness capabilities. Since 9/11, the PHEP program has saved lives by building and maintaining a nationwide public health emergency management system that enables communities to rapidly respond to public health threats.

To learn more about the PHEP program, visit [www.cdc.gov/phpr/readiness](http://www.cdc.gov/phpr/readiness).