

U.S. PUBLIC UNPREPARED

PRIOR TO THE EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, MOST AMERICANS VIEWED "DISASTER PREPAREDNESS" IN THE CONTEXT OF NATURAL DISASTERS (HURRICANES, TORNADOES, FLOODS AND EARTHQUAKES). UNLESS ONE LIVED IN A REGION THAT IS FREQUENTLY VISITED UPON BY SUCH NATURAL DISASTERS, THE IDEA OF PREPAREDNESS DID NOT EXTEND MUCH BEYOND HAVING A FEW NON-PERISHABLE FOOD ITEMS, A FLASHLIGHT, A RADIO, AND SOME SPARE BATTERIES.

A quick trip to the grocery store or local hardware store was preparation enough for such natural disasters, with supplies lasting no more than a few days. However, the tragic events of 9/11 and the ongoing reports of bombings, terrorist killings and threats provide daily reminders of how disaster preparedness has taken on a whole new meaning and scope in the United States today.

While the notion of disaster preparedness has been re-defined in the American psyche as a result of the events of the last few years, actions toward preparedness lag far behind necessity. Further, many of the most vulnerable populations in the U.S. remain most at risk. Now, when Americans think about preparedness, they must also factor in the possibility of man-made catastrophic disasters, including bio and nuclear terrorism. Regardless of the efforts put forth by many governmental and non-governmental organizations, there are too few U.S. citizens who are truly prepared with the three essentials cited by the American Red Cross: 1) make a plan, 2) build a kit, and 3) get trained. In general, most people remain disengaged in preparation and are not taking the initiative toward

steps that could safeguard their own health and safety and that of their family and neighbors.

In this *Wirthlin Report*, co-sponsored by the American Red Cross, we will provide a synopsis of the current state of preparedness among the U.S. public, explore the gaps within people's thinking about what they need to be truly prepared, and identify how the changing definition and importance of preparedness can be communicated through schools and businesses.

THE CURRENT STATE OF NON-PREPAREDNESS

It is apparent that current preparedness messages are not being heard by most Americans. While the public is more aware of the need for preparation today than before September 11th and realizes a catastrophic disaster is more possible today than once thought, they nevertheless remain largely unprepared.

Besides natural disasters, which are more prevalent in some regions of the United States than in others, what other disasters do people consider to be in the range of possibilities? Data collected by the

co-sponsored by:



Together, we can save a life

HIGHLIGHTS

1

Are you prepared?

Recent events have changed the definition of the word

2

It could happen again

Most Americans believe there will be another terrorist attack on U.S. soil

2

Make a plan, build a kit, get trained

Not enough households have taken these three basic steps to get ready for a disaster

3

Why aren't you prepared?

Lack of information, complacency, busyness top list of barriers

3

Preparedness outside the home

Workplaces and schools may be even less prepared than individuals

4

Providing institutional support

What can businesses, schools, government, and community groups do to help?



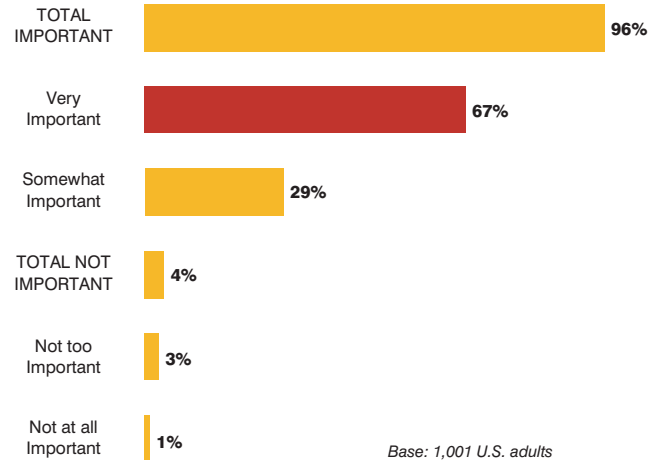
Council for Excellence in Government indicate the top concerns among the American public are bioterrorism, chemical weapons, and attacks on power plants and water facilities.¹ Specifically:

- 76 percent of U.S. adults believe there will be another terrorist attack.
- 50 percent of U.S. adults think the attack may be near where they live or work.
- About 67 percent of U.S. adults say that they would volunteer their time to get trained and prepare to help, but they do not know how.

Americans know there is a possibility of another man-made disaster. However, the public generally believes that if they are prepared for a natural disaster, they would also be prepared for other catastrophic disasters. Interestingly, 84 percent of those surveyed agree that when all Americans are

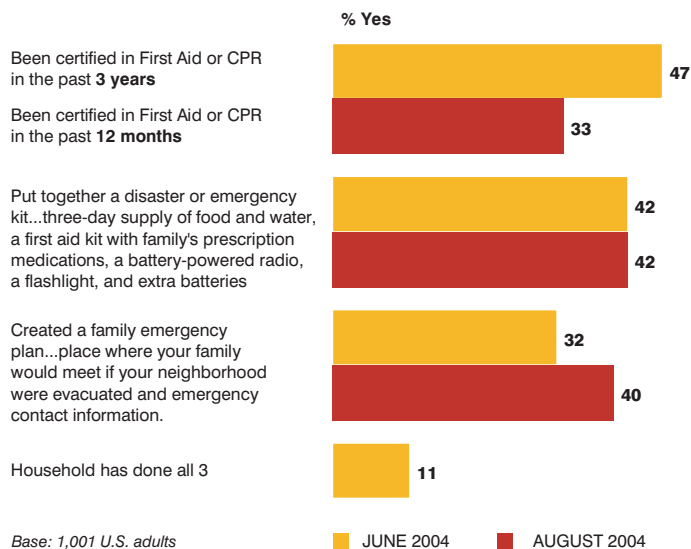
IMPORTANCE OF BEING PREPARED FOR DISASTER

QUESTION: How important do you feel it is for all Americans to personally have taken steps to prepare for a catastrophic disaster such as an earthquake, hurricane, or terrorist attack? Is it...



ACTIONS TAKEN TO PREPARE FOR CATASTROPHE

QUESTION: There are many actions Americans can take to prepare for a catastrophic disaster. After I read each set of specific actions, please let me know, by saying YES or NO, if you or anyone in your household has done these things. Has anyone recently...



prepared for all types of disaster, it strengthens national security. When asked, adults living in the U.S. say they believe it is important for everyone to take steps to prepare for a catastrophic disaster such as an earthquake, hurricane, or terrorist attack, with 67% of those surveyed saying it is "very important" to be prepared. But most do not walk the talk.

While Americans recognize the importance of being personally prepared, fewer than two in ten U.S. adults characterize themselves as very prepared.

Given the level of concern expressed, and the widespread understanding that we could face another disaster, are people following the recommended steps in order to prepare themselves? It does not appear so. A WirthlinWorldwide study conducted June 4-7, 2004 suggests that only one in ten U.S. households are truly prepared when it comes to following all three of the guidelines set by the American Red Cross: making a disaster plan, building a disaster supplies kit, and get-

ting trained to respond to an emergency. While nearly half of survey respondents say they or someone in their household has been certified in CPR, only four in ten have put together a complete disaster kit, and just two in ten American households have taken the initiative to receive specific information and/or training on how to prepare for a catastrophic disaster or other emergency situation in the past 12 months.

Not surprisingly, Americans who have taken such steps as preparing a disaster kit or having a family emergency plan in place tend to feel the most prepared. In terms of demographic and geographic groups, males age 55+, residents of the Mid Atlantic and Pacific regions, and those who are married with children are most likely to say they are prepared.

And who are the least prepared? Unfortunately, some of the nation's most vulnerable populations, including lower income Americans, indicate they are the least prepared. In fact, these lower income

¹ The Council for Excellence in Government national polls of citizens and first responders and town hall meetings that were conducted through the "Homeland Security from a Citizen's Perspective" initiative in 2003.

Americans are more than twice as likely to be ill-prepared as their higher income counterparts. Similarly, young (age 35 or less) single people also report lower levels of preparedness than other populations.

The implication from this last point is both clear and alarming: Americans who would be most likely to be economically devastated from even a short-term loss of job or pay-check in the case of tragedy are also the least likely to be ready in case the unspeakable happens.

BARRIERS TO PREPARATION

Why does it seem that Americans are burying their heads in the sand and continue to believe that they have all the time in the world to take action and the necessary steps toward being prepared for a disaster? Some who have not taken any initiative say they simply don't know where to go for information or that the information is just not available.

More alarming is that some are simply not concerned about being prepared, do not find it to be a necessary priority, or say they are just too busy to take the time. As one respondent stated:

"The demands of life like work and family don't leave time for it. What opportunity do I have for training? With demands of work and family there is little opportunity to do so."

Such a response illustrates the prevalent attitude that "It won't

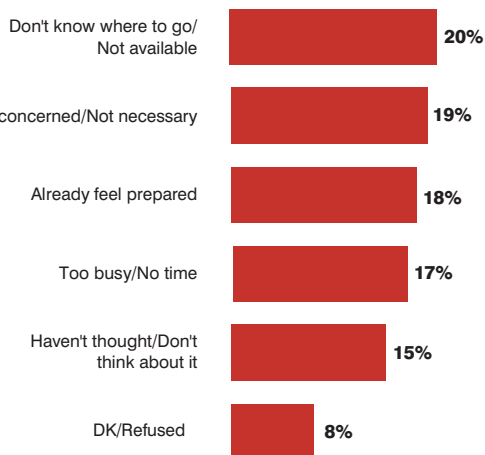
84%

OF U.S. ADULTS AGREE THAT DISASTER PREPAREDNESS STRENGTHENS NATIONAL SECURITY.

BARRIERS TO BEING PREPARED

QUESTION: What are some of the barriers or circumstances that explain why neither you nor another adult in your household have taken the initiative to receive specific information and/or training on how to prepare for a catastrophic disaster or other emergency situation?

TOP SPECIFIC MENTIONS LISTED



Base: 773 U.S. adults who have not taken initiative to seek specific information and/or training on how to prepare for a catastrophe or other emergency situation.

happen to me, not here." Another respondent said,

"Because I live in the middle of rural America, in Michigan, and all we deal with is floods and we all know how to take care of that. There are not going to be any terrorist attacks and anthrax attacks or anything like that. I live in rural America; I'm prepared for a flood."

This lackadaisical attitude toward preparedness is prevalent through history. During the Cold War era of the 1950s a Gallup poll reported that although Americans favored a law requiring each community to build public bomb shelters, only 21 percent of respondents had given any thought to building a home shelter and 50 percent were uninterested in paying \$500 to have one built.² Americans believed in being prepared but weren't willing to put forth the effort mentally and financially.

According to Gallup's work in the 1950's, some of the barriers to building a bomb shelter in preparation for nuclear threats, are similar to the barriers of today, specifically:

- The public believed that surviving a nuclear attack would not be possible.
- The consequences of living in a post-attack world would be far worse than not surviving.
- The information on nuclear attacks was too disturbing to read and digest.
- The public had misperceptions of the actual threats.
- The social atmosphere at the time regarded those who built shelters as alarmists or eccentric rather than patriotic.

PREPAREDNESS OUTSIDE THE HOME

We know that Americans are ill-prepared at home, but what is

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Despite the gaps between what people know and what they do, there is hope. Our research suggests that many of the barriers to disaster preparation can be overcome by educating people about where to turn for information, and by making preparation easier.

the current state of preparation in U.S. businesses and schools? Our findings show that most Americans feel their employers and their children's schools are still behind the curve. In fact, half of U.S. adults say their children's schools/ daycare providers and their employers have not provided them with any information or training on a disaster/emergency plan.

U.S. workers believe it is very important that employers provide them with information about their company's disaster or emergency plan, along with providing first aid or CPR training, and a disaster kit or disaster supplies for their work areas. Yet only half of working U.S. adults say that their employer has supplied them with *any* of this type of information or training that they deem to be important.

Among parents with school age children, most say American school systems are even more behind than individuals when it comes to dealing with needs and expectations for information on disaster preparedness. Parents say it is very important for the school system to provide them with information about where to pick their child up if the school were evacuated, what to do if children need to be held at school if there is a local emergency or disaster, and information about the school's evacuation plan. But America's schools and daycare centers simply are not providing parents with these essential information needs. Only half of parents have received information about the school's evacuation plan or information about where to pick their child up if the school were evacuated. Nearly a third say their child's school has not provided them with anything at all.

WHAT CAN BUSINESSES DO?

The United States has been reminded in recent years how its citizens can come together in unity and strengthen their resolve during a time of crisis. Ordinary people have displayed selflessness and even heroism in helping others in a time of need.

However, Americans need to take the initiative and become more prepared for a disaster instead of waiting to react to a disaster after the fact. Despite the gaps between what people know and what they do, there is hope. Our research suggests that many of the barriers to disaster preparation can be overcome by educating people about where to turn for information, and by making preparation easier.

In a world where the concept of a disaster has developed a new meaning, what can communities do to help Americans understand the relevancy of a potential disaster and close the gaps of preparedness in the nation's workplaces and schools?

Education is the key. Businesses, both small and large, need to educate their employees and provide easier access to vital information needed to understand what steps they need to take to be prepared for a disaster and where to go to get more information. In a society accustomed to convenience and easy access to information, people often leave the hard work associated with preparedness to someone else unless the information and tools are at their fingertips. Businesses need to work within that structure to help people get prepared.

In July 2004, the American Red Cross, along with the George Washington University, the Department of Homeland

Security, and the Council for Excellence in Government, sponsored a symposium of recognized leaders in disaster preparedness and response from government, private sector, non-governmental organizations and academia. These and other data were presented to a panel of experts for discussion and development of plans to get Americans more prepared.

This symposium produced numerous action steps for businesses to help close the gap in preparedness. Overall, businesses need not incur high expenses in order to help close the gap in preparedness knowledge. Possible actions businesses can take include posting preparedness information in their office buildings, offering first aid and safety training, and creating staff councils dedicated to developing workplace emergency plans and improving workplace preparedness. Labor unions are another type of employee-centered organization that can help engage their members in preparedness activities. Employers are a key influencer and educator and have the capacity to speak to their employees in a organized way and over a long period of time. Communication with employees and working with other organizations, both for-profit and not-for-profit, is essential.

The school system also provides one of the very best channels to communicate the preparedness message to families. Schools can help to protect and inform children and more vulnerable populations. Further, parents are much more likely to respond to pressures and appeals from their own kids than from government agencies.

There is much debate surrounding the appropriate role of government in preparedness; however, there is no doubt that government at all

levels can continue to lead the charge to inform all Americans on the importance of preparation. This includes the important work of government-sponsored groups, such as the Citizen Corps, providing local training and information in cities around the United States.

Another area of opportunity for government is to focus on vulnerable populations which have been shown by our research to be the most uninformed and unprepared, such as Americans in the lowest income categories. These people should be a priority because they are the least likely to be prepared and the least likely to have the means to help themselves.

There are a number of community resources with which an organization might partner to promote and help employees and parents to become more knowledgeable about the importance of being truly prepared for a disaster, and the steps needed to get there:

- Non-profit and non-governmental organizations are trusted and respected members of their communities. In our research studies, U.S. adults consistently express a great deal of confidence in charitable organizations and the American Red Cross in the area of preparedness. Many of these organizations have nationwide networks that can provide a point of entry into communities that may be otherwise difficult to reach. They could broaden the reach of preparedness messages by partnering with businesses and schools to share information and resources that are already available.
- Businesses and community groups can help to assemble emergency kits and

donate them to the elderly and citizens with special needs.

- Preparedness activities can be folded into school curricula. Service projects can focus on preparing the community.
- Members of community service organizations and youth groups within schools can serve as information distribution networks, and provide community service, such as volunteering to assemble emergency kits.

For more information about our experience and service in the non-profit sector, contact Justin Greeves at (703) 480-1900.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This report contains selected results from WirthlinWorldwide's National Quorum telephone surveys conducted June 4-7, 2004 and September 24-27, 2004. For each survey, interviews were conducted by telephone with a representative random sample of 1,000 adults (age 18+) residing within the continental United States. The results are weighted by region, gender, ethnicity and education to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of error for each survey is ±3.1 percentage points.

ABOUT WIRTHLIN WORLDWIDE

WirthlinWorldwide, now a part of Harris Interactive® (www.harrisinteractive.com), conducts research for many of the world's leading non-profit organizations, including the American Red Cross. Its work in this sector includes brand development, communications strategy, member outreach and satisfaction, policy research, employee research, and crisis communication.

In September 2004, WirthlinWorldwide was acquired by Harris Interactive, the 15th largest and fastest-growing market research firm in the world, best known for The Harris Poll®, and for pioneering Internet-based research methods.

Together, our mission is to help our clients understand the drivers of human decision making in order to make clear, material and enduring improvements in performance.

Headquartered in Rochester, New York, the company conducts international research from its U.S. offices and through its subsidiaries in Europe and Asia, as well as a global network of independent research firms.

To become a member of the Harris Poll OnlineSM and be invited to participate in future online surveys, visit www.harrispollonline.com.

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WirthlinWORLDWIDE 

RESTON, VA
(703) 480-1900

NEW YORK, NY
(212) 370-9096

CHICAGO, IL
(630) 472-9500

GRAND RAPIDS, MI
(616) 954-0200

SALT LAKE CITY, UT
(801) 523-2553

DETROIT, MI
(734) 542-1480

CINCINNATI, OH
(513) 489-9000

DALLAS, TX
(972) 818-5237

MANCHESTER, UK
(44-1663) 765115

LONDON, UK
(44-20) 7421-6110

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM
(32-2) 647-24-21

HONG KONG, CHINA
(852) 2832-9707

SHANGHAI, CHINA
(8621) 2890-3267

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