

The Aftershock of Katrina and Rita: Public Not Moved to Prepare Facts—at-a-Glance:

Report by the Council for Excellence in Government and the American Red Cross

Katrina was not a motivator.

- Post Katrina, the proportion of Americans who say that they have done a great deal to prepare only increased from 8 percent to 12 percent. The proportion who admits to having done nothing to prepare declined only slightly, from 42% to 36%.
- Fully two in five (38%) Americans say that Hurricanes Katrina/Rita gave them absolutely no motivation to prepare for an emergency.

Despite the horrific images of family displacement/despair on television, most Americans still have no plan for how to communicate with family members.

- Post Katrina, just 36% of adults report that they have prepared a communication plan to contact family members or loved ones in an emergency if they get separated, amazingly, a decrease from 41% in August 2005.
- Even fewer (25%) have established a specific meeting place in the event that they or their family members are evacuated or cannot return home.

The public continues to approach preparedness with a detached sense of reality.

- A majority (54%) of people admit that one reason they choose not to be more prepared is because they do not believe that a disaster will affect them personally. This figure actually represents an increase since August, when 47% said the same.

The public does not know what to do.

- Post Katrina, 44% of Americans report that they have not done more to prepare for a disaster because they do not know what to do—actually up from 37% in August.
- Only 18% of Americans are familiar with their city/town's emergency plan; just 16% are aware of their state's plan. Knowledge of local school (46%) and workplace emergency (63%) is better.
- 42% of whites and 44% of blacks cite lack of knowledge as a reason for not preparing. Fifty-five percent of Hispanics cite this as a reason.

The Midwest is the least prepared, the South is the most prepared.

- Only 52% of Midwesterners report doing a great deal or some things to prepare for a disaster, followed by the Northeast (58%), the West (64%), and the South (74%).
- People who live in the Midwest (61%) are the most likely to believe that a disaster will not affect them, followed closely by people in the East (59%). Residents of the South (49%) and the West (50%) are less likely to think that they will escape a disaster.

Other interesting facts:

- Pre-Katrina, just 24% of the public reported having stored extra food supplies and bottled water in their home; post-hurricanes, 36% have stored extra food and 34% say that they have extra water.
- 76% think that a siren system would be a good investment for their communities. A majority also express interest in receiving alerts in case of an emergency through a landline telephone (59%), followed by cell phones (43%), email (39%), and cell phone text messages (33%).
- Both pre- and post-Katrina, 60% of adults say that they would be willing to spend time volunteering to help with homeland security efforts.