ASPR
Administration for Strategic
Preparedness & Response

HHS EMPOWER PROGRAM
FLOODING AND WINDSTORMS IN NEW YORK

⚠ Why was the HHS emPOWER Program needed?

In 2006 and 2011, severe flooding in Broome County, NY resulted in thousands of residents seeking assistance in emergency shelters, including individuals reliant on electricity-dependent medical equipment and health care services. In 2014, the Broome County Health Department volunteered to collaborate with HHS to explore how emPOWER prototype tools could help address surges in demand for health care and shelter assistance. Since then, the emPOWER Program has served as a resource for Broome County to better anticipate, mitigate, plan for, and respond to the needs of this population prior to, during, and after emergencies.

🚌 How were the HHS emPOWER Program Tools used?

In April 2014, Broome County and the New York State Departments of Health partnered with the HHS Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to test the timeliness of CMS data for conducting life-saving outreach in their community. During the exercise, the team used CMS data to map locations using a geographic information system (GIS), and to conduct outreach to the electricity dependent population, providing them with emergency planning materials, local resources, and actions they could take in the event of an emergency.

Preparedness: Broome County regularly uses the emPOWER Map to support situational awareness and planning for different emergency scenarios. In 2017, the Broome County Health Department used the emPOWER Map to plan for and develop a response to a severe winter weather event.

Response: In 2017, Broome County experienced a windstorm that caused a severe power outage across the county. The Broome County Health Department used the emPOWER Emergency Response Outreach Individual Dataset to identify 58 electricity-dependent at-risk Medicare beneficiaries that were also on the list of approximately 9,000 residents without power. Staff from the Broome County Office of Emergency Services located numbers and called all 58 locations to determine if they needed life-saving or maintaining assistance. For the 24 locations that they were unable to reach, the Office of Emergency Services requested that the Broome County Sheriff's Office send patrols for life-saving outreach.

Quick Facts

Date: April 2014, May 2017

Location: Broome County, NY

Tool(s) used:
- emPOWER Map
- emPOWER Emergency Response Outreach Individual Dataset

Stage(s) of the Emergency Management Cycle:
- Preparedness
- Response
- Mitigation

"These resources are critical to helping our community in preparing and responding to emergencies and protecting our residents in Broome County."

– Jason Garnar, County Executive, Broome County, NY

🤝 Partners
- New York State Department of Health
- Broome County Office of Emergency Services
- Broome County Sheriff's Office
- Broome County Office of Aging
- Medical Reserve Corps
- Southern Tier Independence Center
- Local Hospitals

🗣 What was the impact of the HHS emPOWER Program?

The 2014 exercise provided Broome County Health Department and its partners first-hand experience in identifying resources and shelter locations for the electricity-dependent population. It also provided a remarkable teambuilding opportunity that built relationships across agencies. In practice, the emPOWER Program tools enabled Broome County to provide timely and accurate life-saving outreach in an emergency.

Lessons Learned:
- It does not take long to receive data once the official disclosure request has been approved by HHS. The Broome County Health Department received an initial email from the CMS data contractor, and within an hour they had the data in hand.
- Prior to any emergency, use the emPOWER Program tools to coordinate with state and local partners on evacuation and sheltering plans to address the needs of their at-risk community members.

What's Next?
Broome County is exploring ways to use the emPOWER Program tools to inform resources on safely sheltering-in-place for the electricity dependent at-risk population.