

Potential CASPER Benefits for Emergency Management Officials

What is CASPER?

CASPER is an acronym for **C**ommunity **A**ssessment for **P**ublic Health **E**mergency **R**esponse. CASPER is an ESF 8 response and planning tool. It provides situational awareness to public health and emergency management officials to strengthen disaster response and preparedness planning efforts.

CASPER involves interviewing people in sampled households about their public health needs; these are door-to-door household surveys. The CASPER assessment rapidly obtains information using a quick, reliable, unique, and accurate technique (typical goal is 210 household interviews conducted in one day); this technique is different from other emergency assessments that may be occurring.

These assessments provide valid, credible information about communities and help define the scope and magnitude of specific public health needs. A report containing initial results and recommendations is typically provided within 48 hours after data collection; this timely report enables local officials to make quick decisions. Actions may include, but are not limited to, prioritization of resources, messaging, enhanced health surveillance, or public health interventions.

Potential Benefits in Disaster Response:

- It provides situational awareness on how residents are coping.
- Informs situational awareness:
 - ✓ Confirms or contradicts what is believed known (e.g., “a gut feeling, ” anecdotal reports),
 - ✓ Identifies immediate needs in the community such as food, water, etc.
 - ✓ Identifies previously unknown needs,
 - ✓ Provides estimates on the scope and magnitude of those needs, and/or
 - ✓ Helps in establishing priorities.
- Examples of the types of information generated include:
 - ✓ Estimates on the number of households using gas powered generators (*and how many are being used incorrectly*)
 - ✓ Estimates on the number of households lacking 3 days of food
 - ✓ Estimates on the number of households needing prescription medications
 - ✓ Estimates on the number of households that have someone injured or ill
 - ✓ Estimates on the number of households that have an adult not vaccinated for tetanus
 - ✓ Estimates on the number of households that lack access to medical care
 - ✓ Identifies how residents are getting information (e.g., friends, radio, TV)
 - ✓ Identifies residents’ greatest perceived needs

- Local officials use the results to strengthen relief efforts, such as the management of available resources.
- The information collected can be easily adapted to capture details specific to the incident.
- It can monitor changes of community needs during the recovery period when conducted recurrently.
- It reassures residents that they are not being forgotten.
- It raises the visibility of emergency management and public health in the community.
- It is another response activity that illustrates to the community and the local media that local public health and emergency management officials are responding to the disaster proactively.
- It provides an opportunity for field teams to distribute emergency management and public health educational materials in the community.
- It can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of response activities.
- CASPER results may be used to justify requests for outside assistance.

Potential Benefits in Preparedness Planning, Before a Disaster Happens:

- It provides situational awareness on how residents are preparing for a disaster.
- Examples of the type of information generated includes:
 - ✓ Estimates on the number of households that have a family emergency plan
 - ✓ Estimates on the number of households that have 3 days' worth of food
 - ✓ Estimates on the number of households that have received and understand preparedness educational materials
 - ✓ Identifies resident's preferred means of communication
- Local officials use the results to strengthen preparedness efforts.
- It raises the visibility of emergency management and public health in the community.
- It provides an opportunity for field teams to distribute emergency management and public health educational materials before a disaster occurs.
- It can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of preparedness planning activities.



Prepared by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Community Preparedness Section, DSHS CASPER team, the Regional Epidemiology Response Teams, with information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CASPER toolkit.

For more CASPER information, contact your local or regional health department, or:

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/commprep/disasterepi/casper.aspx>

David Zane at 512-776-6422 or david.zane@dshs.state.tx.us.

Texas Department of State Health Services, P.O. Box 14937, MC 1926
Austin Texas 78714-9347

