

Disaster Research Response Project

The National Institute of Health (NIH) has played an important role in research related to disasters including the World Trade Center attack, Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, the Gulf Oil Spill, and the ongoing Ebola response. Health and safety concerns dominate every disaster and NIH-supported research helps us understand the health risks associated with these tragic events. It is imperative that the U.S. begins public health research as quickly as possible when a disaster strikes.

The **NIH Disaster Research Response (DR2) Project** is an environmental health disaster research system that will provide ready-to-go data collection tools, surveys, forms, and research protocols. These resources will empower a national network of environmental health researchers and members of the public to carry out an immediate research response. DR2 will conduct workshops and provide training to facilitate, support, and integrate this extended and evolving research community.

DR2 was developed by the NIH's National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)¹ and National Library of Medicine (NLM)².

The NIH invites others to join this exciting project. Long-term DR2 success depends on building a diverse group of partners across the nation interested in performing post disaster health research.

Project Objectives

1. **Identify the important research questions and priorities**
2. **Improve access to data collection tools by researchers and qualified members of the public.**
3. **Improve NIEHS capability to quickly collect data necessary for health research**
4. **Train researchers and members of the public in disaster tools and issues**
5. **Integrate DR2 into planning and emergency response systems**
6. **Create a comprehensive disaster research process that includes public health, academia, and impacted workers and communities.**

Become a DR2 Partner!

DR2 partners will be involved in multiple aspects of the project creating user friendly tools and successful strategies for disaster research response. Partners can support the project by:

- Exploring the DR2 website at <http://dr2.nlm.nih.gov> and providing scientific input, user feedback, and advice related to our currently available tools
- Sharing research protocols and lessons learned in past disasters
- Participating in training and pursuing opportunities for field research during environmental emergencies

For more information on how to get involved, please email dr2@nih.gov.

¹ NIEHS Disaster Research Response Efforts: <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/programs/disaster/index.cfm>

² NLM's [Disaster Information Management Research Center](#) includes: Web pages for [Disaster Types and Topics](#) and customized web pages for [Specific Events](#); [Disaster and Emergency Response Tools](#) for hazmat and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents; and [Disaster Apps and Mobile Optimized Web Pages](#). (<http://disasterinfo.nlm.nih.gov/>)

Project Accomplishments

➤ **Ready-To-Go Health Data collection Tools and Research Protocols**

- Conducted an extensive review of past disaster research for the most relevant tools, questionnaires and information available.
- Developed a new repository, containing more than 165 relevant tools, questionnaires, and protocols, along with metadata to facilitate data collection and research for environmental health issues.
- Created a publicly accessible DR2 webpage for information sharing with partners and access to the repository (<http://dr2.nlm.nih.gov/tools-resources>).
- Developed a new NIEHS disaster response protocol to help facilitate timely Institutional Review Board (IRB) review and deployment of researchers to acquire health information and biospecimens.

➤ **Environmental Health Science (EHS) Disaster Research Response Network**

- Created a new coordinated group consisting of NIEHS-sponsored research centers, grantees, and academic partners interested in contributing to improved national research response capabilities and responding to environmental emergencies and disasters. The network creates a platform for community engagement in “research response” and facilitation of “citizen science” to better understand exposures and health impacts.

➤ **Workshops, training materials, and Guidance**

- Hosted a training exercise in Los Angeles for over 140 stakeholders including academia, community organizations, emergency management officials and local, state, and federal government health and environment representatives to test the DR2 tools and strategies.
- Sponsored a 2-day workshop “[Enabling Public Health Research During Disasters](#)” in collaboration with the HHS Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), National Library of Medicine (NLM), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Institute of Medicine (IOM) involving over 230 participants from federal, state, academia, Non-Governmental Organizations, and private industry to discuss disaster research issues and opportunities.

➤ **Broadened Participation of Diverse Groups of Partners**

- **Intra-NIH Disaster Interest Group (I-DIG):** Partnership between 14 NIH Institutes and Centers that aims to share timely information to enhance relationships and processes, improve opportunities for collaborations and discussion platforms for actions regarding disaster research.
- **Federal Interagency Integration:** NIH is among the numerous federal agencies that participate in research following disasters. Additional coordination and collaboration on advancing disaster research includes the Health and Human Services (HHS) Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and others.

Next Steps with New Partners

- Improvements in tools and websites to allow more user-friendly interface and development of individualized research tools and materials
- Further processes and best practices for timely Institutional Review Board (IRB) review of disaster research
- Training exercises with stakeholders to further test and develop strategies
- Initiation of new efforts to foster the timely acquisition of environmental exposure data and toxicology studies to support human health research.
- Initiate dialogue regarding collaborative approaches for data management and sharing.
- Continue multi-stakeholder engagement, discussions, outreach, information sharing, and coordination within the current disaster response and recovery infrastructure.