

Planning framework for a national policy and programme for making health facilities safe in emergencies

WHO urges Governments to develop multisectoral policies and programmes to make health facilities safe in emergencies. Countries that have established a “Safe Hospitals” programme will have taken an important step towards protecting their health facilities and providing health care in emergencies. The following planning framework can be used for developing a national programme.

The **vision** of a national programme for safe hospitals could be: “the health community and partners will work together to ensure health facilities are safe and continue delivering health care effectively in emergencies.” The **goal** of the programme might be to: “save lives, reduce injuries and illness and improve health outcomes in emergencies,” while a set of programme **objectives** should include:

- Protect the lives of staff, patients and visitors in health facilities.
- Deliver health services in emergencies.
- Protect the economic investment in health facilities.
- Facilitate community recovery after emergencies.

The following strategies for making health facilities safe in emergencies should be considered:

Development of national policies and programmes

- Develop comprehensive national policies as well as specific policies focusing on building safety and emergency preparedness of health facilities and staff.
- Coordinate programmes related to the safety of health facilities and emergency preparedness in the ministry of health and other health agencies.
- Call for similar policies and programmes in other sectors (e.g. water and sanitation, energy, finance, emergency committees, media, police, roads and transport).
- Integrate health facility policies, programmes and plans with national disaster risk reduction platforms and emergency management plans in alliance with national emergency services and civil protection organizations.

Integration of safety and emergency preparedness in health facility investment projects

- Advocate safe and cost-effective health facility development to relevant government agencies, regional and international financial institutions.
- Ensure development proposals and plans for all new health facilities include hazard and vulnerability assessments.
- Apply technical guidelines for safe development of health facilities and include these in the terms of reference of its design, construction and operations.
- Assess existing health facilities to identify the priorities for retrofitting and other action.
- Implement independent mechanisms to control and supervise infrastructure projects, such as by involving qualified professionals to work with the project team.

Application of good practices

- Develop and apply comprehensive and integrated system design, including land-use planning, architectural design, and building codes standards for the development and maintenance of health facilities.
- Integrate safety and emergency preparedness into standards for licensing and accreditation of health facilities.
- Provide guidance and promote best practice for:
 - assessment and maintenance of safety of health facilities before and after disasters, including structural, non-structural and functional safety;
 - emergency preparedness programmes in health facilities;
 - multi-task training to manage basic life-saving emergency and surgical interventions;
 - development of safe and resilient health facilities in safe locations;
 - retrofitting and reconstruction of existing vulnerable facilities;
 - safe working environments for health workers;
 - safe infrastructure for health facilities, including continuity of essential services for power, water and waste disposal, and of medical and health supplies of during times of emergency.
- Develop training courses in safety and emergency preparedness in undergraduate, graduate and continuing professional courses. These courses could be situated within health agencies, universities, research centres and professional associations related to the construction and operation of health facilities.
- Support, promote and capture experiences of health facilities exemplifying good practice in safety and emergency preparedness.

Essentials for making health facilities safer

- Develop and implement national policies and programmes.
- Select safe sites for the location of health facilities.
- Design and construct safely.
- Assess safety of existing facilities and take action to reduce vulnerabilities.
- Protect the safety and security of health workers.
- Protect equipment, medicines and supplies.
- Ensure health facilities receive essential services before, during and after emergencies.
- Form partnerships between facilities and the community.
- Create emergency risk management programmes in health facilities.
- Develop health facility emergency response plans.
- Test and update response plans with drills and exercises.
- Train health workers to respond to emergencies.
- Learn lessons from past emergencies and disasters.