

*For Immediate Release*  
*September 30, 2009*

**Health Care and Disaster Planning:  
Understanding the Impact of Disasters on the Medical Community**

*Baton Rouge, La.* – On September 30, 2009, the Louisiana State Medical Society Educational & Research Foundation (LSMS ERF) released “Health Care and Disaster Planning: Understanding the Impact of Disasters on the Medical Community,” a report summarizing research and interviews conducted with medical professionals who were on the front lines during hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Complimentary copies of the book were mailed to governor’s offices, emergency preparedness offices and state medical societies across the nation this week. In addition, a web site [www.healthcaredisasterplanning.org](http://www.healthcaredisasterplanning.org), has been launched to provide free and immediate access to anyone interested in reviewing the report.

“The aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita is still not over,” explains Dr. Floyd Buras, a New Orleans native and past president of the LSMS. “It is important to help emergency planners from all over the country understand how long recovery can be as a result of disasters the size and scope of these Louisiana storms.”

Dr. Buras served as president of the LSMS during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and is often called upon to share his unique experience and thorough understanding of the devastation caused by the 2005 hurricanes. He believes that emergency planners need a sense of how personal a disaster can be, and that this report is just another way to convey that message. This is an important story, not because it happened in Louisiana, but because of the real probability that other communities face catastrophic events as well.

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**Page 2, LSMS Publishes Health Care Disaster Planning Lessons Learned**

Immediately after the hurricanes, many Louisiana physicians were unable to access vital patient information; locate patients; prescribe medications; or communicate with their patients, staff, hospitals and colleagues. Without proper planning, the ability of the physician to render appropriate medical care is compromised.

To better provide for patient's needs, all health care providers and emergency planners should take notice of the lessons learned in Louisiana. Chapter 8 of the **Health Care & Disaster Planning** contains detailed lessons learned and best practice recommendations for health care communities, as well as historical summaries regarding past US disaster experiences; tools for hazard assessment and catastrophe-related policy issues.

*About the Project – <http://www.healthcaredisasterplanning.org>*

The LSMS ERF undertook this project to document lessons learned from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Four years post disaster, south Louisiana and the other impacted Gulf Coast states continue their struggle to recover from the storms and restore vibrant communities that were literally washed away. The final report documents the major breakdowns and failures of emergency preparedness plans and responses related to health care in an effort to educate members of the health care community and those tasked with developing and implementing emergency preparedness plans. The Physicians Foundation funded the work that has gone into this report because of its belief that Louisiana medical professionals are in a distinct, although unfortunate, position to share lessons learned with other states.

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**Page 3, LSMS Publishes Health Care Disaster Planning Lessons Learned**

*About the Physician's Foundation - <http://www.physiciansfoundations.org>*

The Physicians' Foundation was founded in 2003 through settlement of a class-action lawsuit brought by physicians and medical associations against private third-party payors. Through research and education, the Foundation's purpose is to advance the work of practicing physicians and to improve the quality of health care for all Americans.

*About the LSMS Educational & Research Foundation – <http://www.lsms.org>*

The LSMS established its **Educational and Research Foundation** (ERF) to engage in research projects related to medical science, medical economics, public health, sociology, and related areas; and to make available the results of such projects to the interested public, medical schools and the medical community of the state. The LSMS ERF also supports medical education through grants and scholarships. The LSMS is a voluntary association of physicians providing leadership for the advancement of the health of the people of Louisiana and serving as the premier advocate for patients and physicians. For more information about the LSMS, please contact Sadie D. Wilks at [sadie@lsms.org](mailto:sadie@lsms.org) or by phone at (225) 763-8500.

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Contact:  
Sadie D. Wilks  
LSMS Director of Public Affairs  
225.763.8500 • 800.375.9508  
[sadie@lsms.org](mailto:sadie@lsms.org)