

# Eye of the Storm: Impact of the 2004 Hurricane Season on Florida Hospitals May 2005

## Executive Summary

The Florida Hospital Association (FHA) serves as the advocacy organization representing Florida's hospital community. During 2004, four hurricanes impacted our state and the communities our members serve. Following the end of the hurricane season, FHA conducted a survey of the hospitals impacted by the storms and the results of that survey are contained in this report.

- The survey was sent to 265 hospitals, including non-member hospitals, of which 93 responded; resulting in a 35.1 percent response rate. Hospitals from all regions responded with the highest rate coming from the Central Florida region. However, many hospitals were not directly impacted by the storms and thus did not respond to the survey.
- The most significant impact was to hospital roofs, totaling \$15 million in damages, and another \$10.6 million in building-related damages, exclusive of roofs. In total, more than \$67.4 million in damages were reported by the survey respondents. Hospitals also experienced lost revenues totaling \$50.7 million from the delay of patient services and another \$5.3 million for patient transfers, hospital evacuations, care to the uninsured, and for sheltering special needs patients. The total costs associated with staffing hospitals during the storms totaled more than \$39 million, which includes \$23.7 million in overtime.
- Based on the responses, Florida's hospitals incurred \$163.2 million in unexpected costs related to the storms. The survey also found that expenses related to facility modifications to reduce damage from future storms would exceed \$48 million from the responding hospitals, with an average hospital impact of more than \$1 million. This brings the total impact on hospitals of more than \$200 million.
- Maintaining communications with support agencies remained a challenge throughout the storm season. Thirty hospitals, or almost two out of every five hospitals, lost cellular phone coverage during at least one storm. One in four hospitals, or 21 facilities, lost phone service at some point as well. However, respondents reported that despite losing phone capabilities, 77 percent indicated that the phone was the most reliable communications tool during and after the storm. Internet/e-mail was the second most reliable, followed by cell phones.

The lessons of 2004 will continue to be used as a teaching tool for years to come. Florida's hospitals reached out to each other and offered services and assistance to the patients of our state. Many of the hospitals overlooked the fact that they were responding to requests by competitors. This report not only summarizes the consequences of the 2004 Hurricane Season on Florida's hospitals, but also the contributions by Florida's hospitals to our state in ensuring that the health and safety of all Floridians were protected.

### Staff Resources:

Kim Streit, VP/Health Care Research and Information, [kims@fha.org](mailto:kims@fha.org), (407) 841-6230  
A.C. Castello, Director/Community Health Initiatives, [ac@fha.org](mailto:ac@fha.org), (407) 841-6230  
Rich Rasmussen, VP for Strategic Communications, [rich@fha.org](mailto:rich@fha.org), (850) 222-9800