



## CONTINGENCY PLANNING : How Do Healthcare Facilities Survive?

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Endemic or pandemic infections, natural disasters such as earthquakes or floods, or terrorist activities seriously disrupt or may overwhelm healthcare facilities ability to serve those in need or to sustain their operations. Two examples of these are the great influenza pandemic of 1918 and most recently the Haitian earthquake. During the influenza pandemic, as many as 100 million people perished, approximately 1/15 of the world's population at that time. The devastating impact of the influenza pandemic in the United States paralyzed large portions of the healthcare system and threatened societal infrastructure. The Haitian earthquake overwhelmed the Haitian and the world's capacity to deal with destruction of this magnitude. Valuable lessons have been learned from these and other disasters. To ensure that a healthcare system may provide for the sick and needy, it must ensure its own survival. This requires extensive and careful planning to ensure supply systems, communication, leadership succession, protection of its healthcare workers, security, and other measures. Basic principles for survival of healthcare systems under these circumstances will be reviewed.