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2024-2025 Annual REPORT



AZCHER

Arizona Coalition for Healthcare
Emergency Response

ABOUT US

The Arizona Coalition for Healthcare Emergency Response (AzCHER) is a membership organization comprised of hospitals and healthcare organizations, public health, EMS, emergency management and other entities. Our purpose is to build resilience in the healthcare delivery system so that it is prepared to respond to large-scale emergencies or disasters.

AzCHER has 1,037 facilities in the coalition, and the coalition conducts trainings and exercises around the top vulnerabilities in Arizona.



Coverage is divided into four regions:

CENTRAL

NORTHERN

SOUTHERN

WESTERN

PHEP TRIBAL PARTNERS

Members collaborate every day to be more prepared to respond to, and recover from, any event.



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we reflect on the 2024–2025 year, one truth stands out:

knowing your hazards and exercising your plans isn't just important, it's essential.

At AzCHER, our readiness efforts are guided by our annual Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (HVA) and Resource Gap Analysis (RGA), which help us identify top threats and shape our training programs.

This year, AzCHER supported two hospital evacuations, both facilities had recently practiced evacuating during coalition exercises and were prepared when the worst happened.

We also assessed coalition readiness across healthcare settings. While larger networks performed well, gaps in smaller facilities helped us target training where it's needed most.

We responded with action:

- **Exercises:** 137 member facilities participated in our readiness tabletop exercise, focused on heat and cybersecurity. The Medical Response Surge Exercise (MRSE) engaged 24 hospitals and 27 long-term care centers in evacuation drills based on extreme heat and wildfire scenarios.
- **Real-world events:** Our readiness was tested, and proven, through incidents including:
 - Baxter IV fluids shortage, behavioral health hospital evacuation, rabies vaccine search, hospital flooding, multiple wildfires, remote hospital evacuation, and numerous smaller resource requests and monitoring efforts.

These stories reflect the strength of our network and the dedication of our members. Whether facing heatwaves, wildfires, floods or supply chain disruptions, AzCHER stands ready. And so do you.

Thank you for your continued partnership and commitment to healthcare emergency readiness.

Warm regards,



Robin Oothoudt

Executive Director

AzCHER

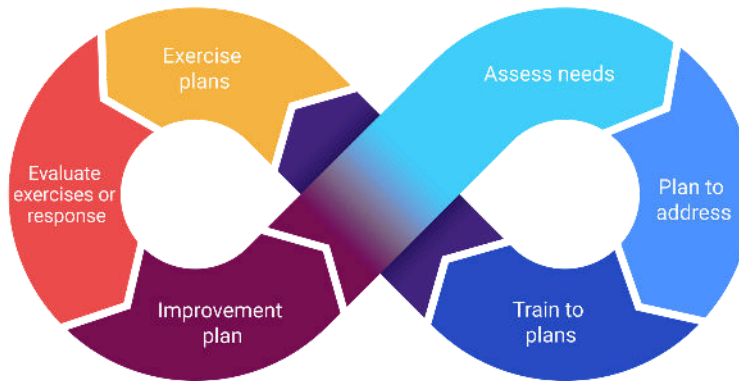


The AzCHER team from left to right, top row: Robin Oothoudt, Dawn Irons, Mary Douglass; middle row: Jamie Beauvais, Amy Di Miceli and front row: Shawna Murphy



ASSESSMENT AND PLANS

Planning process



Under the Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP), AzCHER continues to prioritize strategic planning and readiness through annual assessments and plan development. These efforts ensure that our coalition remains responsive to evolving threats and aligned with federal and state preparedness standards.

Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (HVA) / Resource Gap Analysis (RGA):

This annual requirement drives our training and exercise program. Members identify the most pressing hazards through a survey that weighs both likelihood and impact.

We encourage your participation in this assessment; it allows you to save your responses and fulfill your annual HVA requirement under Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Readiness assessment:

Using the top three hazards identified in the HVA/RGA, members were surveyed on their readiness to respond.

Among the gaps identified:

- Training that can be delivered in small, manageable increments and integrated into daily workflows.
- Short, focused exercises or drills that reinforce preparedness without disrupting operations.

TRAINING

As part of its commitment to strengthening healthcare emergency preparedness across Arizona, AzCHER delivered comprehensive training to more than 800 healthcare professionals through live sessions, including:

- Hospital Emergency Response Team (HERT)
- Emergency Management Basics
- Incident Command Basics
- Hospital Incident Command System (HICS) / National Incident Command System (NICS)
- Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP)
- And more

AzCHER also organized cohorts to attend the Center for Domestic Preparedness, where participants received specialized training through the Healthcare Leadership for Mass Casualty Incidents course and included decontamination procedures.



Hospital Emergency Response Team (HERT) functional exercise at Valleywise Health.





EXERCISES

This year, AzCHER led a series of impactful preparedness activities, including two major exercises, the Medical Response Surge Exercise (MRSE) and the Readiness Tabletop Exercise, alongside other initiatives aimed at enhancing healthcare system resilience across Arizona.

The Medical Response Surge Exercise (MRSE)

The MRSE engaged 24 hospitals and 27 long-term care centers, all of which either evacuated their facilities or decompressed to receive evacuees. Scenarios were based on HVA findings and focused on extreme heat impacts and wildfire response. It is also a required component of the HPP grant.

The Readiness Tabletop Exercise

The Readiness Tabletop Exercise saw participation from 137 member facilities, who worked through two scenario modules: one focused on heat-related emergencies, and the other on cybersecurity threats. This exercise validated member Readiness Plans.

Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) training





REAL WORLD EVENTS

AzCHER responded to multiple real-world events this year, demonstrating its critical role in supporting Arizona's healthcare system during emergencies.

Baxter IV fluids shortage

When Hurricane Helene caused massive flooding in North Carolina, the nation's supply of IV fluids was compromised for months. AzCHER hosted situational awareness meetings to keep hospitals and healthcare partners informed with updates from Baxter, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR) and state officials.

AzCHER logistics supported multiple resource requests, and many members stepped up to assist those facing shortages.

St. Luke's Behavioral Health Hospital evacuation

On Aug. 8, 2024, St. Luke's Behavioral Health Hospital experienced an HVAC failure, shutting down air conditioning. The facility contacted AzCHER for evacuation support. Central Region Manager Jamie Beauvais convened a meeting via MS Teams, bringing together facilities and agencies. The City of Phoenix and Maricopa County provided portable chillers, and the American Medical Response (AMR) placed a supervisor in the facility's emergency operations center to coordinate ground transport. All 90 patients were safely evacuated.

Rabies vaccine search

A dorm at Northern Arizona University was invaded by bats, a situation that turned serious when one tested positive for rabies. With many students and staff potentially exposed, Coconino County Public Health requested help locating rabies vaccine supplies statewide. AzCHER logistics assisted in the search.



REAL WORLD EVENTS

White Mountain Regional Medical Center (WMRMC) flooding

WMRMC experienced flooding after a severe rainstorm. Shawna Murphy, northern region and logistics manager, helped locate and fill sandbags, and even assisted in deploying them, knee-deep in water.

Oak Ridge fire

AzCHER helped locate N95 masks, privacy screens, filters and air scrubbers. Thanks to the members who stepped up to provide supplies.

Greer fire

The Greer fire forced our northern/western region manager to evacuate her own home for a week. Despite this, Shawna remained in contact with the hospital and continued assisting members throughout the event.



Water contamination evacuation

A facility on the Navajo Nation requested help evacuating due to water contamination. AzCHER coordinated a Teams meeting with all involved agencies.

Given the facility's remote location (nearest hospital was 79 miles away), AzCHER brought together nearby hospitals and EMS providers. Beds were secured for all 32 patients within 4 hours, and all were transported within 13 hours, nearly half by helicopter. The facility remained closed for 12 days while systems were flushed and declared safe.

AzCHER also responded to numerous smaller resource requests and monitored additional events for healthcare needs.

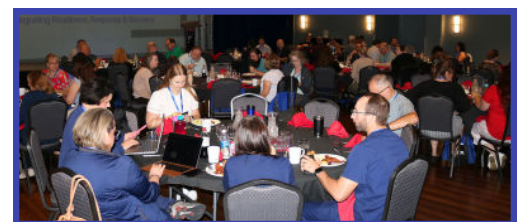
2025 CONFERENCE

AzCHER hosted its Fifth Annual Emergency Preparedness Conference on June 11, 2025, at the Arizona Broadway Theatre in Peoria. This year's theme, "Empowering Action: Integrating Readiness, Response and Recovery," focused on strengthening healthcare resilience across Arizona.

Attendees heard from nationally recognized speakers on topics including:

- Building resiliency during downtime
- Recovering facilities after wildfire events
- Lessons learned from the Eaton Canyon fire
- What surveyors are looking for
- Strategies to embed resilience into healthcare organizations

AzCHER extends its sincere gratitude to the conference sponsors for their generous support and to the speakers for sharing their expertise and time. The success of this year's event underscores the importance of continued investment in emergency preparedness and coalition-building across the healthcare sector.





MEMBER SATISFACTION

AzCHER members gave an overall satisfaction score of nine out of ten! Services were consistently rated as high-value, with no score below eight. We're proud to provide meaningful support to Arizona's healthcare community, and your feedback shows it's making a difference.

What our members are saying

"I truly appreciate the amazing support and readiness you've provided for us in emergency preparedness from real world incidents to exercises and training, and I'm grateful for all the wonderful collaboration we've had along the way."

Daniel DeCarlo
Director System Safety and Emergency
Preparedness

"I just want to say thank you to you and your team that provide these trainings. You guys are awesome."

Sarah Welch
United Surgical Partners International

"Thank you! We appreciate you and your team! Because of your guidance, we aced our State Survey last year! Can't thank you enough."

Heidi D Nikolich, administrator
Meridian Health Care Providers, Inc.

"Thank you for the support received, by AzCHER, as we navigate our crisis. AzCHER's timely response allowed us to safely transfer patients to other healthcare organizations for care and provided resources to address our questions.

Ahe'hee (Thank you)."

An anonymous CEO

WE'D LIKE YOUR FEEDBACK!

Scan the QR code and let us know how we are doing.

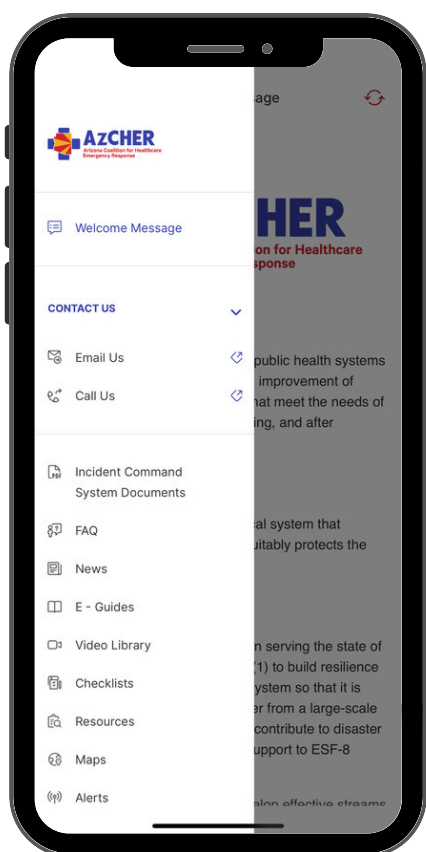


- Satisfaction with AzCHER programs, resources and support
- Effectiveness of communication
- Value gained from participation

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It's your go-to tool for emergency preparedness, response, recovery and training, all in the palm of your hand! Stay ready, stay informed, anytime, anywhere.



AzCHER MOBILE APP

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