



# New Jersey Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness **NEWS**

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## **For Immediate Release**

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## **RUTGERS TO SURVEY NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND AWARENESS OF EVACUATION PLANS**

### **-Data Will Be Gathered For State and Local Emergency Management Officials-**

**New Brunswick, N.J.** –Rutgers University researchers will conduct random telephone surveys over the next several months with thousands of residents across New Jersey to determine how prepared residents believe they are to respond to an emergency and evacuate the area in the event of a natural disaster or terrorist attack. The surveys are being undertaken on behalf of the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (OHSP), New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and the state’s Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) region.

As part of two federally funded evacuation planning studies, the survey is designed to improve the state’s capabilities in dealing with natural or man-made disasters. Residents will be asked in the phone surveys to respond to questions about their own preparedness in the event of a disaster and how they think they would evacuate the area. Each respondent will be asked how they would respond to a series of scenarios, including incidents such as hurricanes, industrial accidents, flooding or terrorist attack.

“As we approach the seventh anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks, determining the public’s level of preparedness is a key component of our emergency management strategy,” said Richard L. Cañas, Director of the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness. “The results of these surveys will guide future policy decisions in critical emergency response areas, such as evacuation planning, sheltering, and identifying individuals who may require additional assistance during any type of emergency,” Cañas said. The Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness is charged with ensuring that OEM has the resources it needs to lead the state’s response efforts.

“The evacuation and preparedness survey will allow OEM and OHSP to proactively gauge our residents’ level of emergency preparedness,” said Colonel Joseph R. “Rick” Fuentes, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police and Director of the State Office of Emergency Management. “We will gather valuable feedback from the survey, feedback that will enhance our planning and response efforts,” Fuentes said. The Office of Emergency Management leads the state’s response and recovery efforts in the event of an emergency — either natural or man-made.

*(more)*



## *Evacuation Survey/2*

The survey will ask respondents if they have had to evacuate their homes in the past due to emergencies; whether they know if their local government has an emergency evacuation plan; and where they would turn for information. The surveyors will ask the respondents where they think they would go and how they would get there if a disaster did strike. The survey will also attempt to gauge the extent to which households have residents with special care needs, such as vision, hearing or mobility impairments, or require the use of oxygen or dialysis equipment.

The federal UASI program is designed to provide funding to high-threat, high-density urban areas, and to help them build capacity to prevent, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism. Nationally, there are 60 UASI regions funded by the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS). New Jersey's UASI encompasses Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Morris, Passaic and Union counties.

The Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC) at Rutgers University is managing the two studies. The Bloustein Center for Survey Research will conduct the surveys for VTC. Both centers are part of the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers.

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