



OIG NEWS

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Office of Inspector General
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330 Independence Avenue SW.
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OIG Releases Report on Commissioned Corps' Response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

Evaluation Recommends Improvements and Department Concurs

Inspector General Daniel R. Levinson announced today that the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a report entitled, "The Commissioned Corps' Response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita." The report contains the findings of an evaluation OIG conducted to assess the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps' (Corps) response to the hurricanes and whether improvements were needed.

OIG determined that Corps officers provided critical support to affected communities and State health officials, but the Corps could improve its response to public health emergencies. OIG found that the Corps was not able to meet some State needs and that deficiencies in officer preparation, deployment logistics, field operations, and officer reimbursement impacted the efficiency and the effectiveness of the response. OIG recommended that the Corps incorporate a number of infrastructure changes into its comprehensive transformation process. The Assistant Secretary for Health concurred with OIG's findings and recommendations.

"The physical and emotional traumas suffered by the residents of the Gulf Coast require that the Federal Government be prepared to respond as efficiently and capably as possible," said Inspector General Levinson. "In this case, the Corps assisted many Americans in their time of need, and by conducting this review OIG identified specific areas that, if addressed, will enable the Corps to more effectively respond to disasters. I am pleased that our colleagues in HHS have embraced OIG's recommendations and are working continuously to improve the Department's response to public health emergencies."

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The U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps is one of seven U.S. uniformed services and is made up entirely of officers commissioned on the basis of their health-related training. Agencies within and outside of HHS employ Corps officers to provide health care and related services in health professional shortage areas. After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck the Gulf Coast, the Corps carried out the largest deployment in its 207-year history. Since 2003, the Corps has been engaged in a continuous effort to improve its response capacity. OIG's evaluation was designed to assist with that effort and to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in Departmental programs.

To read the full report, go to

<http://www.oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-09-06-00030.pdf>.

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