

Leveraging the HHS emPOWER Program to Enhance Power Outage Planning

The HHS emPOWER Program (emPOWER) is a powerful resource born of a partnership between the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). emPOWER, which is used primarily utilized by emergency managers, public health officials, and disability advocates, employs data to determine the number of Medicare beneficiaries in a jurisdiction who rely on electricity-dependent medical equipment in their home and might need assistance during a power outage. Populations include those who live independently and use any one of 14 electric-powered medical devices or receive out-patient dialysis, home-based oxygen service, hospice care or other types of home care medical support. emPOWER resources include federal Medicare data, mapping assets, artificial intelligence tools, and training modules.

Read: [When the Power Fails: Helping Life-Support Equipment Users](#)

emPOWER helps preparedness planners anticipate the potential number of individuals that may surge to shelters and hospitals seeking a source of power during an outage. Additionally, it can provide helpful detail about the types and number of devices used collectively by at-risk Medicare beneficiaries. emPOWER data can also support life-saving outreach by providing the names and addresses of those using electric-powered medical devices who may require assistance during a power outage.

emPOWER's Six Core Components

- 1) The [HHS emPOWER Map](#) is updated monthly and displays the total number of electricity-dependent Medicare beneficiaries and those receiving out-patient dialysis, home-based oxygen service, hospice care or other types of home care medical support in a geographic area (i.e., state, territory, county, or ZIP Code). The emPOWER map also provides near real-time natural hazard data.
- 2) **The Representational State Transfer (REST) Service** uses GIS systems to gather de-identified Medicare claims data allowing visual representation of medical device users on GIS platforms.
- 3) [emPOWER AI](#) puts data in the hands of first responders through mobile device applications and makes data accessible through voice-command home devices such as Alexa and Google Assistant.
- 4) The **emPOWER Emergency Planning Data Set** details the number of Medicare beneficiaries in a jurisdiction who use one or more of 14 types of medical devices or receive in-facility dialysis, home health care services, home based hospice service, and oxygen services. The data can be sorted by user's medical devices, such as ventilators and oxygen concentrators.

5) The **emPOWER Emergency Response Outreach Data Set** provides authorized users with the names and addresses of individuals using one or more of 14 types of medical devices or receiving in-facility dialysis, home health care services, home based hospice service, and oxygen services.

6) The **State Medicaid & CHIP Program Data Pilot Initiative**, a pilot program, provides knowledge, tools, and technical assistance to help states and territories create emPOWER datasets using their own state or territory-operated Medicaid and CHIP data.

emPOWER Success Stories

New York City public health officials augmented data provided by emPOWER's Emergency Response Outreach Data Set by hiring a vendor to secure phone numbers for the electricity-dependent Medicare beneficiaries. This enables officials to use the city's emergency notification system to send automated voice and text messages to at-risk beneficiaries in advance of coastal storms.

Public health officials in Los Angeles County have sought and received emPOWER's Emergency Response Outreach Data Set more than a dozen times to support life-saving outreach in response to wildfires, mudslides, and Public Safety Power Shutoffs. Officials from both jurisdictions shared their experience and helpful tips in the **ASTHO Webinar: [Leveraging the HHS emPOWER Program to Enhance Power Outage Planning for Users of Life Support Equipment](#)**.

Conclusion

All planning efforts to address the impact of a power outage on individuals who use electric-powered medical devices in their homes should incorporate emPOWER resources. Close coordination by stakeholders with public health officials is also critical to success as certain emPOWER resources, including the Emergency Planning Data Set and the Emergency Response Outreach Data Set, can only be accessed by designated public health officials before being shared with other government agencies or pre-approved organizations.

Additional emPOWER Resources

Individuals preparing to use emPOWER resources are strongly encouraged to closely review [emPOWER's website](#) and study its online learning tools and resources, including:

- Fact sheets.
- Frequently asked questions (FAQs)..
- Training resources
- Job aids.
- Supplemental job aids.
- Stories in the field.