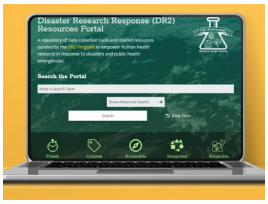
NIH DR2 Program: Providing Resources for Disaster Researchers

Science on the Scene

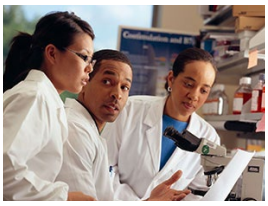
For the past decade, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Disaster Research Response Program (DR2) has collaborated with domestic and global partners to build effective infrastructure for timely human health research after disasters and public health emergencies. Through DR2, researchers can access:

- The DR2 Resources Portal, which includes curated surveys and tools that expedite research response and data collection for researchers nationwide.
- Training and education opportunities that include best practices from community members.
- The DR2 Community of Practice, which helps researchers identify federal experts, coordinate research efforts, and inform future strategies immediately after disasters.
- Funding and partnership opportunities backed by the collective resources of federal agencies involved in disaster response.

Disaster Research Protocols



The DR2 Resources Portal provides researchers with over 550 data collection tools, surveys, and protocols — expediting human health research in post-disaster scenarios.



The Rapid Acquisition of Pre- and Post-Incident Disaster Data (RAPIDD), protocol, released in 2015, helps disaster researchers expedite Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. RAPIDD provides standardized methodologies and instruments that were previously IRB-approved and deployed in disaster research. In 2023, DR2 released the RAPIDD Protocol Designer, a virtual, customizable interface that allows researchers to export an individualized protocol for IRB approval.

Training and Education

DR2 hosts workshops, exercises, and other training and education opportunities to help researchers prepare for and conduct disaster-related research.

Participants of the 2022 DR2 workshop hosted by the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington

DR2 promotes the use of occupational safety and health training materials developed by the NIEHS Worker Training Program. Available via the National Clearinghouse for Worker Safety and Health Training, topics relating to hazardous materials for disaster responders and workers include:

- Chemical and Biological Terrorism
- Earthquakes
- Hurricanes & Floods
- Infectious Disease Outbreaks
- Oil Spills
- Radiological Dispersion Devices
- Responder & Community Resilience
- Wildfires
- Researcher Deployment Guide

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Community of Practice

The DR2 Environmental Health Sciences (EHS) Network includes academic researchers coordinating on issues related to disaster research response. The network aims to identify knowledge gaps and propose solutions around disaster research implementation.

The Intra-NIH Disaster Interest Group is composed of scientists and staff across 15 NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices. The group works to improve NIH capacity to coordinate, design, and implement timely research to address the impacts associated with public health emergencies and disasters.

DR2 has partnered with the National Science Foundation (NSF) to support the **University of Colorado Boulder Natural Hazards Center**, providing grants to rapidly deploy following a disaster, as well as the **University of Washington Natural Hazards Reconnaissance Facility**, helping researchers access equipment, tools, and expertise in support of collecting perishable data.

Partnerships also include other NIH institutes, federal agencies, public sector representatives, and academia. DR2 leads the Action Collaborative on Disaster Research, overseen by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, which facilitates expert discussions on the U.S. disaster research enterprise. International relationships are also a priority; in 2024, the DR2 Program co-hosted a disaster research workshop with Japan's National Institute for Environmental Studies.

> *"Improving disaster research response is urgent, especially with the occurrence of larger and increasingly costly natural disasters. We need to not only have timely information to save lives, but also the vital research that supports our improvement of preparedness, resiliency, and recovery in communities."*
>
> **— Aubrey Miller, NIH DR2 Program director**

Funding Opportunities

The **NIEHS Time-Sensitive Research Grants Program** aims to review and fund grant applications within three to four months. This funding mechanism has supported several disaster-related research efforts, including: the drinking water crisis in Flint, Michigan; a chemical spill near Wilmington, North Carolina; wildfires in California and Montana; and hurricanes Harvey (Texas), Irma (Florida), and Maria (Puerto Rico). Most recently, NIEHS funded six grants to investigate the health effects of the **2023 train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio**.

Additional **Funding Opportunities** through NIEHS, NIH, federal agencies, and other organizations are available on the DR2 Program website.

To learn more about the NIH DR2 Program and its accomplishments, see the **NIH DR2 Program 10th Anniversary Report** (March 2025).

Last updated November, 2025