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## **Disaster Preparedness and Health Screening: An Opportunity to Train Emergency Responders of OT Students and Practitioners Through Participation in Operation Lone Star**

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**Introduction:** Natural and human-created disasters are increasing in frequency throughout the world which has an impact on the health and occupational engagement of individuals, families, and communities. Capacity building is necessary to ensure that OT practitioners are prepared to undertake disaster response.

**Objectives:** This presentation will demonstrate how students and practitioners are able to participate in community disaster preparedness and humanitarian mission. It will discuss the strategies, planning and collaboration process involved as well as the growing OT role in the event.

**Approach:** With a focus on preparedness, Operation Lone Star (OLS) is a yearly event in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas to test protocols that would be used in response to natural disaster, biological terrorism, or disease epidemics. It allows the Texas military to evaluate how the exodus of locals will be accommodated; to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of interagency communication; and to train emergency responders in providing services. The event also provides residents along the Texas-Mexico border with needed medical services such as immunizations, hearing, and vision exams.

**Practice Implication:** Participation in this community initiative enable students and practitioners to evaluate a population-based primary care program, be involve with local community disaster preparedness and planning, and establish the role of OT in disaster response. OLS allows students to be part of an interprofessional team with members of other health professions, military, health departments, and public school systems.

**Conclusion:** Occupational therapy practitioners have the opportunity to be part of the solution for helping people experiencing a disaster.