

## CASE STUDY: NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

# Can Good Research Inform Decisions about a Region's Emergency Preparedness?



### CHALLENGE

After devastating wildfires in 2003 and 2007, the American Red Cross of San Diego and Imperial Counties decided in 2010 to focus on emergency preparedness, in addition to traditional disaster relief. The organization realized it needed to accurately measure regional emergency preparedness and then evaluate that data in a way that could help guide budgeting and resource allocation decisions and maximize the effectiveness of programs.

### RESPONSE

The Red Cross engaged Competitive Edge to develop a data-driven approach to measuring the region's preparedness. In addition to benchmarking current preparedness, the research would provide insight into how to increase it, by understanding why some people are better prepared than others, and pinpointing who could benefit from targeted preparedness information.

### SOLUTION

Standard preparedness research had been based on a dichotomous variable: prepared or unprepared. CERC developed its Personal Emergency Preparedness (PEP) Index to measure how comprehensive each resident's preparedness efforts have been in terms of disaster planning and emergency kits. CERC analyzed PEP Index data from its emergency preparedness survey of 500 San Diegans to clearly identify what types of residents were more prepared than others & why.

### ORGANIZATION PROFILE



## American Red Cross

The American Red Cross of San Diego and Imperial Counties serves more than 3.6 million people across 10,000 square miles. Its mission is to prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.



*"The Personal Emergency Preparedness (PEP) Index you created as a foundational metric is light years ahead of simply asking someone whether they are prepared. The scaled approach of the PEP Index gives us a much better look into preparedness levels. It is very useful when comparing geographic regions or demographic segments."*

**Malinda McDonald, COO**  
**American Red Cross of San Diego**

## KEY RESULTS

Knowing -- not guessing -- is a hallmark of CERC's services. In the case of the American Red Cross Southern California Region, knowing where to put resources, and what programs to pursue, tremendously benefits the organization. It strengthens its ability to deliver on the nonprofit's mission and helps the region respond to emergencies that confront us.

The PEP Index is a robust and highly sensitive measure for benchmarking preparedness, then assessing increases after a communications campaign. This can be done among demographic segments and geographic regions.

In 2019, due to the PEP Index's success, the American Red Cross Southern

California Region asked CERC to help it understand levels of *community* preparedness. CERC responded by developing its Community Emergency Preparedness (CEP) Index.

The CEP Index works on the same principal as the PEP Index -- recognizing that preparedness is best thought of as a continuum -- and does its job by identifying preparedness levels in communities.

This helps the Red Cross target its efforts within cities, towns and communities that are less prepared for a disaster- ultimately helping the nonprofit allocate preparedness communication resources, adjust efforts and deploy programs at the community level.

