

August 10, 2016

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** North Carolina Immunization Program (NCIP) Participants

**FROM:** Wendy Holmes, R.N., Head *WH*  
Immunization Branch

**SUBJECT: 2016 Hurricane Season Preparedness**

The purpose of this memo is to ensure you are prepared for the 2016 hurricane season. During the months of June through November, hurricanes or tropical storms could pose a threat to North Carolina. In preparation, we would like you to take the following precautions to protect your vaccine supply now.

To ensure your facility is ready, please take a moment to review your storage and handling preparedness:

- Review and update, if needed, your Emergency Vaccine Management Plan and Routine Vaccine Management Plan and post a copy on or near your refrigerator and freezer. All Emergency Vaccine Management Plans and Routine Vaccine Management Plans must have a recorded review date within the last 12 months and the signature of the individual responsible for the content. ([www.immunize.nc.gov/providers/storageandhandling.htm](http://www.immunize.nc.gov/providers/storageandhandling.htm)).
- All staff (current, new, and temporary) should read the plan and understand what to do in the event of refrigerator or freezer malfunctions, power failures, natural disasters, or other emergencies. Janitorial and security staff should be aware of the plan and know the procedures to notify designated personnel about any problems with the vaccine storage equipment or power outages.
- The primary and back-up vaccine coordinators are responsible for monitoring storage equipment, tracking weather conditions, severe weather patterns, and safe transportation of vaccine if needed.
- Set up and maintain a monitoring/notification system during times of inclement weather or other conditions that might cause a power outage. A continuous-monitoring temperature alarm/notification system with battery or generator back-up should be considered, especially for facilities with large inventories.
- Whenever possible, suspend vaccination activities BEFORE the onset of emergency conditions to allow sufficient time to pack and transport vaccine.
- Verify you have the appropriate packing materials to safely transport or temporarily store your vaccine. A certified calibrated thermometer with a current certificate of calibration is required to transport vaccine. If the primary thermometer can easily be moved, it may be packed with the vaccine being transported if a backup thermometer is not available.



- If you have emergency generators, review their test log to make sure the weekly/monthly tests are successful.
- During a brief power outage (less than two hours), keep storage unit doors closed. The storage unit temperature may be maintained with the proper amount of water containers in the refrigerator, with frozen coolant packs in the freezer, and by keeping the storage unit door(s) closed.

Key points to remember if a power failure occurs:

- Determine the cause of the power failure and estimate the time it will take to restore power. If a timeframe for the restoration of power cannot be determined, **do not leave vaccine in a non-working unit**. If the outage is expected to be long term (greater than 2 hours), activate your Emergency Vaccine Plan and transport the vaccine to the back-up facility, or
- If temperatures reach 8° C (46° F) or warmer in the refrigerator, or -15° C (5° F) or warmer in the freezer, begin your emergency vaccine procedures. Immediate action is required when temperatures fall outside the recommended range.
- Do not discard vaccine or administer vaccines exposed to out of range temperatures without consulting with the Immunization Branch. Mark vaccine with a “DO NOT USE” sign, move the vaccine to an approved working storage unit, and contact the Immunization Branch at 1-877-873-6247 for further instruction about the viability of the vaccine.

Proper preparation is key to successfully handling an emergency, whether it is a hurricane, unexpected power failure, or failure of your refrigerator. Having coolers sized for and capable of transporting all of your vaccine on site is important. Follow the NCIP Vaccine Transport Guidance at <http://www.immunize.nc.gov/providers/storageandhandling.htm> for the required way to transport vaccine.

If you have questions or need assistance with preparedness, call the Help Desk at 1-877-873-6247 and press option 4 for storage and handling staff or call the storage and handling staff directly at 919-707-5574.

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