



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Public Health – Women’s & Children’s Health Section

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June 11, 2012

**MEMORANDUM**

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

**FROM:** Beth Rowe-West, R.N., B.S.N., *BRW*  
Head, Immunization Branch

**SUBJECT:** Upcoming Hurricane Season

The purpose of this memo is to ensure you are prepared for the 2012 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 precautions to protect your vaccine supply now.

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

- Designate a primary and back-up vaccine coordinator to monitor storage equipment, track weather conditions, and ensure safe transportation of vaccine if needed [even after hours].
- Review and update your Disaster Recovery Plan with staff (required to be updated yearly).
- Maintain written protocols on site for a) vaccine packing, b) transportation, and c) proper storage of vaccine at the alternate storage facility.
- Maintain appropriate packing materials to safely transport or temporarily store vaccine.
- Fill empty space in your refrigerator with water jugs.
- Line the bottom and sides of your freezer with ice packs.
- Verify that all frozen vaccines are properly stored in the freezer. These include: MMR, MMR-V, and varicella.
- Ensure that a certified thermometer is located on the middle shelf with the vaccine in the refrigerator and one is located in the middle of the freezer with the vaccine.
- Continue to check and log the refrigerator and freezer temperatures twice a day, even if you have an alarm system or a monitoring system. Check temperatures twice daily, first thing in the morning and just before leaving for the day.

Key points to remember if a power failure occurs:

- Record the temperature of the refrigerator/freezer but limit the opening and closing of refrigeration units.
- Once the temperature reaches 8° C or warmer in the refrigerator, or -15° C or warmer in the freezer, begin your disaster recovery procedures. Immediate action is required when temperatures fall outside the recommended range.
- Move the vaccine to a properly working unit with regularly recorded in range temperatures.
- Do not discard vaccine and do not administer affected vaccines until you have discussed the viability of the vaccine with the Immunization Branch.

**Whenever possible, facilities should suspend vaccination activities BEFORE the onset of emergency conditions to allow sufficient time for packing and transporting vaccine.** If you do not have a back-up generator, make arrangements with the local hospital, retirement home, fire station, or another practice to store your vaccine there when weather predictions call for such inclement weather, or when your vaccine storage equipment cannot be fixed or the power cannot be restored within 6 hours. Before moving your vaccine, call the location to ensure their back-up generator is working and temperatures are within the appropriate range.

Please take time to review the *NCIP Minimum Required Vaccine Ordering, Handling, and Storage Procedures* on our web site at: <http://www.immunize.nc.gov/providers/storageandhandling.htm>. If you have any questions call the Help Desk Staff at 1-877-873-6247.

Attachment

cc: RICs SMT CO Staff Vaccine Manufacturers Steve Shore  
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