



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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May 30, 2017

**MEMORANDUM**

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

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

**SUBJECT: 2017 Hurricane Season Preparedness**

The purpose of this memo is to remind NCIP providers of the upcoming hurricane season and to ensure you are prepared for severe weather conditions that might impact your facility in advance. During the months of June through November, hurricanes or tropical storms could pose a threat to North Carolina. Proper preparation is key to successfully handling an emergency, whether it is a hurricane, unexpected power failure, or failure of your refrigerator. In preparation, we ask that you take the following precautions to protect your vaccine supply before an emergency.

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 who might receive vaccine deliveries (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. Building maintenance, janitorial and security staff should be aware of the plan and know the procedures to notify designated staff 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. Please note in flood-prone areas, disaster threats may continue after the initial hurricane has passed.
- Set up and maintain a monitoring/notification system during times of inclement weather or other conditions that might cause a power outage.

- 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, including a certified calibrated datalogger to monitor temperatures. If the primary datalogger can easily be moved, it may be packed with the vaccine being transported if a backup 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 time frame 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 or administer vaccines exposed to out of range temperatures without consulting with the Immunization Branch. Mark exposed vaccine with the date and time and a label “DO NOT USE”, move the vaccine to an approved working storage unit at your back-up location, and contact the Immunization Branch at 1-877-873-6247 for further instruction about the viability of the vaccine.
- During natural disasters that impact large geographical areas, the CDC may be required to stop all shipments due to road conditions. Remember to follow the guidance on vaccine storage and handling found at <http://www.immunize.nc.gov/providers/storageandhandling.htm>

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.

cc: SMT    CO Staff    Vaccine Manufacturers    Elizabeth Hudgins    RINs/RICs    Gregg Griggs  
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