



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

ROY COOPER • Governor
MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH • Secretary
DANNY STALEY • Director, Division of Public Health

June 1, 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: North Carolina Immunization Program (NCIP) Participants

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

SUBJECT: 2018 Hurricane Season Preparedness

The purpose of this memo is to remind NCIP providers of the upcoming hurricane season and to ensure you are prepared ahead of time for severe weather conditions that might impact your facility. 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 a refrigerator or freezer malfunction. 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 vaccine 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).
- All staff that might receive vaccine deliveries (current, new, and temporary) should read the plans 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 also be aware of the plans and know the procedures to notify designated staff about any potential 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 and severe weather patterns, and safely transporting vaccine, if needed. Please note in flood-prone areas, disaster threats to your facility may continue after the initial storm 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.
- Review the vaccine transport guide and verify that you have easily available, the appropriate packing materials to safely transport or temporarily store your vaccine, including a case or more of 8.0 or 16.9 fluid ounce frozen water bottles that can be conditioned for transport of your refrigerated vaccines, frozen coolant packs for frozen vaccine transport, and a certified calibrated datalogger to monitor temperatures in each storage container. If the primary datalogger can easily be moved, it may be packed with the vaccine being transported if a backup is not available.

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • Division of Public Health, Immunization Branch

LOCATION: 5601 Six Forks Road, Building 2, Raleigh, NC 27609
MAILING ADDRESS: 1917 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1917
www.ncdhhs.gov • TEL: 919-707-5550 • FAX: 919-870-4824

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- If you have emergency generators, review their test log to make sure the weekly/monthly tests are successful and verify enough fuel is available for one or two days use.

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 cannot be determined, **do not leave vaccine in a non-working unit.**
- During a power outage, never open the storage unit door until power is restored or it is determined that vaccines need to be packed in separate storage containers and/or transported to an alternative storage facility. The storage unit temperature may be maintained with the proper amount of water bottles in the refrigerator, and frozen water bottles and coolant packs in the freezer.
- Begin preparing for your emergency procedure – shelter in place or transport – after 30 minutes of a power outage. This includes pre-chilling onsite coolers or calling your emergency back-up location to prepare for your probable arrival.
- Do not wait for refrigerator temperatures to reach 8°C (46° F) or freezer temperatures to reach -15° C (5°F) to begin your emergency vaccine procedures. **Reminder-** immediate action is required when temperatures fall outside the recommended range.
- Do not discard or administer vaccines exposed to out of range temperatures. Mark exposed vaccine with the date and time, label “DO NOT USE”, move the exposed vaccine to an approved working storage unit at your back-up location, and contact the Immunization Branch at 1-877-873-6247, option 4, to report the incident and for further instruction. Please note that the Immunization Branch may be closed due to inclement weather.
- During natural disasters that impact large geographical areas, vaccine shipments may be suspended due to road conditions.
- Always follow the guidance on vaccine storage and handling found at:
<http://www.immunize.nc.gov/providers/storageandhandling.htm>

Please call the Immunization Branch 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 if you have questions or need assistance with preparedness.

cc: SMT CO Staff Vaccine Manufacturers Elizabeth Hudgins RINs/RICs
Gregg Griggs Harita Patel Terri Pennington Ann Nichols Frank Skwara