

New York State Department of Health

January 17, 2019

Alert:

Major Winter Storm Events Thursday evening through Sunday morning

Guidance for Hospitals, Nursing Homes, Homecare Agencies, Hospice, Outpatient and Adult Care Facilities

The first of two storm systems will spread across New York State beginning on Thursday evening, with two to five inches of snow expected through Upstate. Over the weekend, New Yorkers can expect to experience 12 to 24 inches of snow during a second storm system. The Governor yesterday activated the State Emergency Operations Center to enhanced monitoring mode, and assets are prepared to be deployed to keep roads and communities safe.

Following a brief lull in weather on Friday, New Yorkers should expect a general 12 to 24 inches of snowfall throughout Upstate New York during the following 36 hours. The system will develop and move west to east on Saturday throughout Upstate, especially during afternoon and evening hours. The time period between Saturday evening and Sunday morning is currently being forecasted as having the highest potential for the heaviest snowfall, with rates expected to reach one to two inches per hour. Some sleet and freezing rain could also mix in late Saturday night into early Sunday for portions of Mid-Hudson Region. Northwest winds will increase on Sunday as frigid, Arctic air overtakes the area. In addition to causing areas of blowing and drifting snow, dangerously cold wind chills in the teens to 20s below zero are possible through Monday.

In the lower Mid-Hudson Valley, New York City and Long Island regions, the storm will move in Saturday evening into Sunday and is expected to result in two to three inches of snow. Light snow is expected around 5 p.m. Saturday afternoon. There is also a chance of freezing rain on Sunday morning between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m. A change-over to all rain will occur around 8 a.m. Rain will continue through Sunday afternoon before a change-over to snow, which will taper off around 8 p.m. There is a chance of a flash freeze on Sunday evening as temperatures plummet. Wind chill values between zero and negative five with temperatures in the teens Sunday into Monday.

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) are reminding providers to take the following precautions to prepare:

During, and following the storm, providers needing assistance should make requests for assistance through their local Office of Emergency Management (OEM)/Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Facilities in need of evacuation should immediately notify their NYSDOH Regional Office. Regional office business hour contacts, and 24/7 Duty Officer contact information is available below their local Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

All Facility-based, Outpatient and Home Care and Hospice Providers:

The provider's leadership and managers should review their Emergency Response and Evacuation Plans to be ready to activate these plans, to ensure procedures are up to date, understood by staff and contact information for all key staff and response partners is current.

All facility based, outpatient, home care and hospice providers are encouraged to review plans for staff response that include: necessary notifications and alerts to staff, adjustment of shifts and management of staffing shortages due to transportation impacts, securing needed supplies, accommodations for staff that must remain on site and failover communications if primary methods are impacted. If warranted, facility based providers should consider bringing in additional staff in advance of the storm to ensure sufficient coverage during the storm event and recovery period.

It is very important for facilities to test their emergency generators as soon as possible to ensure that they are operating properly. Facilities with patients or residents who are dependent on powered medical devices and equipment, and who identify problems with the operation of generators or any aspect of their Essential Electrical System (EES), should immediately call for service, and inform their local office of emergency management if they are not able to have generator operations restored.

Facility fuel supply should be checked and necessary action taken to ensure that it is adequate to cover operations for the period leading up to the storm and for at least 72 hours following the storm.

All facilities should ensure they have enough general supplies to last a period of at least 72 hours after the storm begins without expectation of delivery from suppliers. Now is the time to ensure supplies are on hand, ordered, and/or being delivered. During emergencies, facilities located in the 5 boroughs of NYC in need of services or supplies, should contact New York City Emergency Management. Facilities in need of assistance on Long Island and Westchester (or other parts of New York State) should contact their County EOC or County Office of Emergency Management if the EOC is not activated. It is important to note that facilities should rely on these resources as a backup and not the primary source should they need supplies pre-storm.

Adult care facilities (ACF)

Those ACFs without a generator should ensure they have adequate supplies of food that can be served without heating, and additional blankets and plans for keeping residents warm.

Homecare and Hospice:

Homecare agencies and hospices are encouraged to review patient care needs and consider adjustment of visits to ensure that Level One patients are visited prior to the start of a forecasted storm, and that all patients are reminded of how to call for assistance if they lose their power or have a medical emergency.

Plans for adjusting staff schedules/prioritizing patient visits in the days immediately following the storm should be made, particularly if travel is still impeded, with a focus on reassigning staff based on proximity to patients to limit travel and reduce staff exposure to hazardous conditions. Agencies should also ensure that staff and their patients have enough supplies to cover a period of at least 72 hours following the start of the storm.

Agencies should be ready to contact staffing services if a large proportion of their regular staff are unable to travel and perform any of their normal visits for a period of time following the storm.

Agencies should also be ready to communicate with their patients during and immediately following the storm to perform checks on their safety and condition of their health. A plan for managing situations where patients refuse to evacuate a hazardous situation, should be developed and included in the Agency's emergency response plan.

ESRDs:

Apart from communicating with appropriate local office of emergency management regarding any specific needs, ESRDs in the impacted area should also communicate with the New York State ESRD Network, which assists in planning and response and can also direct assistance to the providers. Dialysis centers should consider potential impacts on transportation services and try to reschedule dialysis patients when necessary to provide an earlier treatment when a storm is predicted.

Critical Communications During Emergencies:

Every facility must ensure that all computers and networks, necessary for disaster planning and response, are supported by generator power. The following key Health Commerce System (HCS) data systems must be used by the provider where applicable during the emergency:

- The NYSDOH Communications Directory –all business and emergency contact information for key administrative and functional roles in the Communications Directory must be updated and accurate to assure alerts and notifications are received by the facility.
- The Health Electronic Response Data System (HERDS) - HERDS surveys may need to be conducted to capture important information regarding a provider's status during an emergency and providers must be able to respond to any survey that might be activated.
- eFINDS Patient and Resident tracking application: In the event that evacuation of hospitals, nursing homes or adult care facilities becomes necessary, the NYSDOH is reminding facilities that use of the eFINDS system will be required to track the movement of all patients and residents between sending (evacuating) and receiving facilities. Should evacuations become necessary, the NYSDOH will activate eFINDS and send a notification to facilities with instructions regarding eFINDS use for that emergency.

All facilities should know where their eFINDS supplies are stored, (i.e., barcode scanner, wrist bands, and paper tracking logs) and assure that staff who have been trained on the use of the system are ready and available to perform this function. If facilities have questions or need assistance with eFINDS use, please send email to: efinds@health.ny.gov. Staff from NYSDOH will respond. Make sure eFINDS quick reference cards are available at the facility for staff.

Steps for Requesting Temporary Suspension or Modification of Statutes and Regulations

When requesting suspension or modification of requirements of New York State or Federal regulations, the following procedures should be followed to ensure prompt and appropriate action:

1. Prepare to provide the following information:
 - a. State the difficulty you are experiencing.
 - b. If known, indicate the specific statute or regulation that is restricting the ability to perform essential patient/resident operations or maintain the life safety of patients/residents.
 - c. State what modification you are requesting and how it will help.
 - d. Provide a general idea of the length of time you expect the current situation to continue
2. During Business hours, contact the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) Office of Primary Care and Health Systems Management (OPCHSM), Regional Office (RO) Program contact, or Central Office (CO) Program contact that oversees your type of facility (see contact list below). During weekends, holidays, and weekdays from 5 p.m. to 8 a.m., contact the NYSDOH Duty Officer.
3. OPCHSM CO Program, Division of Legal Affairs and Executive staff will review the request and, where necessary, communicate the request to the Governor's Office or to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Region Two office. If the decision cannot be made without additional information, the RO Program Director will reach back to your facility to gather the additional information.
4. Once a final decision is made, it will be communicated to your facility by the RO Program Director, along with any pertinent information regarding the request.

- During a large-scale emergency event, when multiple providers request the same relief, a general response to all relevant providers will be sent to those providers using the NYSDOH HCS Integrated Alerting and Notification System (IHANS), notifying them of the waiver request decision and any relevant details.

IMPORTANT NOTE: There are no statutes or regulations that have been “pre-approved” for suspension or modification during emergency events. A new waiver request must be made every time a disaster presents. Each request will be evaluated and a decision made based on the unique circumstances existing during each unique emergency situation.

Roster of Contact Information NYSDOH Programs

<i>Division of Hospitals and Diagnostic & Treatment Centers (includes Community Health Centers)</i>		
Region	Title	Phone Number
Capital District	Regional Program Director	518.408.5318
Central New York	Regional Program Director	315.477.8538
Metropolitan Area	Regional Program Director	212.417.5990
Western New York	Regional Program Director	716.847.4310 (Buffalo)
		585.423.8141 (Rochester)
Central Office	Division Director	518.402.1004
Off Hours (5:00 pm to 8:00 am, all weekends and holidays)	NYSDOH Duty Officer	866.881.2809
<i>Division of Nursing Homes and ICF/IID Surveillance</i>		
Region	Title	Phone Number
Capital District	Regional Program Director	518.408.5372
Central New York	Regional Program Director	315.477.8472
Metropolitan Area	Regional Program Director	212.417.4999
Western New York	Regional Program Director	716.847.4320 (Buffalo);
		585.423.8020 (Rochester)

Central Office	Division Director	518.408.1267
Off Hours (5:00 pm to 8:00 am, all weekends and holidays)	NYSDOH Duty Officer	866.881.2809
Adult Care Facility and Assisted Living Surveillance Program		
Region	Title	Phone Number
<i>Capital District</i>	Regional Program Director	518.408.5287
<i>Central New York</i>	Regional Program Director	315.477.8472
<i>Metropolitan Area</i>	Regional Program Director	212.417.4440
		631.851.3098 (Long Island)
<i>Western New York</i>	Regional Program Director	585.423.8185
<i>Central Office</i>	Division Director	518.408.1133
Off Hours (5:00 pm to 8:00 am, all weekends and holidays)	NYSDOH Duty Officer	866.881.2809
Division of Home and Community Based Services		
Region	Title	Phone Number
<i>Capital District</i>	Regional Program Director	518.408.5287
<i>Central New York</i>	Regional Program Director	315.477.8472
<i>Metropolitan Area</i>	Regional Program Director	212.417.4921
<i>Western New York</i>	Regional Program Director	716.847.4320 (Buffalo);
		585.423.8121(Rochester)
<i>Central Office</i>	Division Director	518.408.1638
Off Hours (5:00 pm to 8:00 am, all weekends and holidays)	NYSDOH Duty Officer	866.881.2809

