

Disaster Recovery/Business Continuity WHAT TO DO IF....

Approaching tropical storm or hurricane



2025

Benjamin Franklin said:

“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.”

WE ARE NOT FAILING TO PREPARE AND WE WILL NOT FAIL

It is impossible to prepare for some disasters and disruptions such as power outages, fires, water leaks, etc. However, the organization conducts regular risk assessments of our facilities to make them as safe as possible.

We **CAN** prepare for *any* disaster or disruption by having a step-by-step plan for what to do, who should do it, and when should it be done.

We **CAN** prepare ourselves and offices in advance of natural disasters such as hurricanes.

HOW TO PREPARE

TROPICAL STORMS & HURRICANES

When in the cone of an approaching tropical storm or hurricane...

Before leaving the office:

- if you have a laptop, take your laptop home (be sure to take the power supply)
- disconnect and take your phone (be sure to take the power supply)
- assist others with covering monitors, printers, and other equipment
- disconnect any electronic device (i.e., monitors, printers, fax machines, copiers, computers, etc.) and be sure that the plug is not on the floor
- make sure all papers are placed in file cabinets or drawers

TROPICAL STORMS & HURRICANES

When in the cone of an approaching tropical storm or hurricane...

IT is responsible for:

- powering down the servers
- raising computer equipment off of the floor
- ensuring that all computer equipment, servers, etc. are secure

OFFICE CLOSURE

The decision to close the office early or not open the office due to a power outage, approaching storm, or any other reason is not an easy one. The responsibility for the decision rests with Senior Management.

HOW TO PREPARE

- ❖ **IF** the office will be closed for the day, a message will be placed on the employee hotline: (844) 575-4327. Updates will also be placed on the hotline.
- ❖ Depending on the severity of the situation and reported outages, messages regarding the office status may be sent by text to the employees' cell phones. **BE SURE THAT YOU HAVE PROVIDED YOUR CURRENT CELL PHONE NUMBER FOR THIS PURPOSE.**
- ❖ Department managers are to maintain a printed copy of all their direct reports' phone numbers and personal email addresses.

Provider Network Comprehensive Hurricane Preparedness Plan

Introduction:

This Hurricane Preparedness Plan aims to ensure the safety of patients, staff, and facilities during and after a hurricane or other natural and human-caused disasters. The plan covers the creation of a disaster kit, development of a communication plan, coordination with local emergency systems, and managing patients and staff before, during, and after the event. This plan is posted to our informational website and emailed to our provider Network in the event of a pending natural disaster alert from the State of Florida and/or Federal Emergency Management.

1. Disaster Kit Preparation:

A well-stocked disaster kit is essential to ensure that critical needs are met during and after a hurricane. This kit should be comprehensive and designed to support both staff and patients for a minimum of 72 hours if closing your office in advance of the hurricane or natural disaster is not an option.

Essential Items to Include:

- **Water and Non-Perishable Food:**
 - At least one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days.
 - Canned or freeze-dried foods, granola bars, and other easy-to-prepare items.

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- **Medical Supplies:**

- First aid kit with bandages, gauze, antiseptic, tape, scissors, and gloves.
- Prescription medications for patients and staff.
- Extra oxygen tanks or devices for patients who need respiratory support.
- Spare medical equipment and devices (e.g., blood pressure cuffs, thermometers, stethoscopes).
- Sanitary wipes, hand sanitizers, and disinfectants.

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):**

- N95 masks, face shields, gloves, and gowns.
- Protective eyewear and respiratory protection if required.

- **Emergency Tools:**



- Flashlights with extra batteries.
- Portable power banks or generators.
- A multi-tool or basic tool kit for emergency repairs.
- Solar-powered chargers.
- Blankets, sleeping bags, or cots.

- **Communication Tools:**

- Battery-powered or hand-cranked radios to receive weather updates.
- Satellite phones or two-way radios for communication in case of power outages.
- Extra cell phone batteries or portable charging devices.

- **Personal Care Items:**

- Hygiene products (toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, wet wipes).

HOW TO PREPARE

- Diapers and baby formula if needed.
 - Feminine hygiene products.
 - **Important Documents:**
 - Copies of ID, insurance papers, medical records, and emergency contacts for both staff and patients.
 - A list of essential supplies and medications.
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2. Communication Plan:

Effective communication during a hurricane is critical to ensuring the safety of everyone involved and maintaining operations.

Key Components of the Communication Plan:

- **Internal Communication:**



- Establish a communication tree for staff to follow. Ensure that key staff members (including department heads and emergency coordinators) can quickly reach each other in case of an emergency.
- Use both primary and secondary communication methods (e.g., phone calls, emails, two-way radios).
- Develop a system to communicate with non-essential staff to advise them on evacuation, shelter, or work schedules.

- **External Communication:**

- Stay connected with local authorities and emergency services through the appropriate channels (e.g., FEMA, local government agencies, weather services).
- Develop a system for patient family members to check in or receive updates regarding their loved ones.
- Maintain communication with suppliers and vendors for critical supplies (e.g., medications, food, medical equipment).

- **Public Information:**

- Regularly update patients, staff, and the public with emergency instructions, evacuation routes, and shelter locations via hospital/public address systems, text alerts, and social media.
- Ensure that emergency information is available in multiple languages, as needed.

HOW TO PREPARE

- **Post-Hurricane Communication:**

- After the event, communicate recovery steps, including facility status, treatment availability, and the status of critical systems.
- Notify patients and staff about the facility's reopening status, shelter, and transportation options.

3. Coordinating with Local Emergency Systems:

Effective coordination with local emergency systems ensures that your organization is integrated into the broader community response.

- **Local Emergency Response:**

- Establish strong relationships with local emergency management agencies, hospitals, fire departments, police, and other first responders.
- Participate in local disaster drills and tabletop exercises to practice coordination.
- Ensure that your organization's location is listed in local disaster response databases.

- Share your emergency plans with local authorities to ensure that they know where to send resources in the event of an evacuation.

- **Evacuation Routes and Shelters:**

- Develop and share evacuation plans with local emergency services to ensure coordination.
- Identify local shelters and ensure that patients and staff have access to transportation to these shelters.
- If the facility needs to evacuate, ensure safe and coordinated transport for vulnerable patients (e.g., those requiring life-support equipment).

- **Supplies and Backup Resources:**

- Establish a system to receive and distribute emergency supplies quickly.
- Coordinate with local vendors for backup power, fuel, food, and medical supplies.
- If needed, coordinate with regional health organizations for mutual aid agreements regarding patient transfers or resource sharing.

4. Procedures for Managing Patients, Staff, and Facilities:

HOW TO PREPARE

Hurricanes can cause significant disruptions to healthcare facilities. Managing patients, staff, and the physical structure is crucial for continuity of care.

Pre-Hurricane Procedures:

- **Patient and Staff Assessment:**
 - Prioritize patients for evacuation or sheltering in place, considering their medical needs (e.g., critical care patients, those dependent on life-sustaining equipment).
 - Ensure all staff are trained and ready to assume emergency roles during the disaster.
- **Facility Preparation:**
 - Inspect the facility for hurricane readiness (e.g., reinforcing windows, securing loose objects, checking the integrity of the roof).
 - Review and test backup power sources to ensure they can support essential operations, such as life-support equipment and refrigeration for medications.
 - Maintain a backup water supply for hygiene and patient care.

- **Patient Notifications:**

- Inform patients and their families about potential disruptions to care and the actions that will be taken during the hurricane.
- Encourage patients to update their emergency contact information.

During the Hurricane:

- **Sheltering in Place:**

- Secure all patients and staff in designated shelter areas that are safe from floodwaters and structural damage.
- Maintain patient care continuity, ensuring that critical treatments (e.g., dialysis, medications) are continued.

- **Staff Roles and Responsibilities:**

- Ensure that staff members are in their assigned roles and remain in constant communication.
- Provide clear instructions for staff on evacuating patients or staying in place if evacuation is not possible.

- **Managing Medical Needs:**

HOW TO PREPARE

- Ensure that medications are available, especially for critical patients.
- Establish protocols for managing and documenting patient care in case of power outages or communication breakdowns.

Post-Hurricane Procedures:

- **Damage Assessment:**

- Conduct a thorough assessment of the facility for structural damage, floodwaters, and electrical outages.
- Assess the safety of equipment and systems, including backup power, water supply, and medical equipment.
- Contact insurance providers for immediate damage claims.

- **Patient and Staff Recovery:**

- Prioritize the needs of patients requiring immediate care or transfer to other facilities.
- Continue to monitor staff welfare and ensure adequate rest and nutrition for recovery.

- **Resuming Normal Operations:**

- Once the facility is deemed safe, begin phased reopening, ensuring essential services are restored first (e.g., emergency care, intensive care units).
 - Communicate the resumption of normal services to patients, staff, and the community.
 - Debrief with staff and local emergency responders to identify areas for improvement in future preparedness.
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5. Continuous Improvement:

- **Post-Event Review:**

- After the event, hold a debriefing session to evaluate the effectiveness of the preparedness plan, communication strategies, and response actions.
- Update plans based on lessons learned and feedback from staff, patients, and local authorities.
- Revise training programs to address any gaps identified in the response.

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- **Training and Drills:**

- Regularly conduct training for all staff, including medical and non-medical personnel, to ensure they are familiar with the procedures outlined in the plan.
- Organize regular disaster drills, including hurricane-specific drills, to test the response to various scenarios.

Conclusion:

A comprehensive hurricane preparedness plan is critical for ensuring the safety and continuity of care in healthcare facilities. By proactively addressing the logistics of disaster kits, communication strategies, local coordination, and patient care, healthcare providers can mitigate the impact of a hurricane and ensure a swift recovery. Regular updates, training, and drills are essential to maintaining readiness for future disasters.