

WEATHER EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Checklist for Healthcare Facilities

Storms and other emergencies have become more severe over the last few years. Healthcare facilities must be prepared well in advance of these emergencies to handle a potential patient influx, loss of utilities, infrastructure damage and reduced staffing. This list covers many of the issues that arise in an emergency and includes questions that should be raised with management. It can be used in labor-management meetings and any other available venues to make sure your facility is prepared to meet patient and staff needs when an emergency occurs. Please contact NYSNA's Occupational Health and Safety Representatives at healthandsafety@nysna.org for additional discussion and advice.

✓ **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

- What is the facility's decision-making structure and who is in charge during the emergency? Will managers be required to be present in the facility (not remote)?

✓ **COMMUNICATION**

- Who is in charge of communication with staff? How will staff be notified and kept informed during the emergency? How can staff communicate issues and needs to the Incident Command Center?

✓ **STAFF NEEDS**

- **Overtime:** If overtime is legally mandated, what is the maximum number of hours nurses will be required to work? What measures will be taken to relieve staff for sleep and breaks during the emergency?
- **Sleep:** What areas will be designated for staff rest and sleep? Are these areas safe, quiet, and dark? Are an adequate number of cots, pillows and clean linens available?
- **Food:** Is there an adequate food supply to

feed all staff for the duration of emergency conditions? What measures are in place to provide hot food and meet special dietary needs?

- **Hygiene:** Are showers, hygiene supplies and clean scrubs available for staff?
- **Transportation:** What plan does the facility have in place to facilitate getting staff to work if roads have limited access and public transportation is not functioning? Can the facility also assist staff in returning home after they are no longer needed at work? Does the facility have plans to help staff get to work if the emergency conditions exist in nearby regions (but don't affect the facility directly)?
- **Parking:** What measures will be in place to address parking shortages should the storm limit parking areas?
- **Safety:** Is enough PPE available if supply chains are disrupted? Are enough portable HEPA filters available if ventilation must be shut off? Will security personnel make sure individuals who seek shelter are not allowed to roam the facility?

WEATHER EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST FOR HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

✓ EDUCATION AND PRECEPTING

- What measures will be in place in the event RNs are reassigned to assist in areas outside of their professional expertise?

✓ PATIENT MANAGEMENT

- What plans will be in place to cancel elective procedures?
- What plans will be in place to facilitate rapid patient discharge?
- If the event results in increased patient arrivals, how will they be accommodated in a safe manner? How can existing spaces be repurposed?
- Can telehealth services be temporarily expanded (without the use of AI) so patients unable to reach the facility can receive care from qualified medical personnel?
- What mental health services will be available to patients and families during and after the event?
- Are enough medical supplies in place to meet patient needs should supply chains be disrupted?
- Has additional morgue space been identified should the emergency result in increased fatalities?

✓ INFRASTRUCTURE

- What back up plans are in place should critical infrastructure systems, such as electrical power, potable water, ventilation and medical gas systems fail? Is there enough back-up power to cover key systems until emergency conditions end? Is the backup generator regularly tested? What plan is in place to access patient information should the EMR

system fail? Are paper systems available, and do staff know how to use these forms for doctor orders, blood bank requests, diagnostic tests, etc.? Are adequate protections in place to prevent cyber attack?

✓ VISITATION

- Will visitation limits be implemented? What measures will be in place if visitors cannot leave the facility? What measures will be in place if the "worried well," or others seeking shelter from the event, arrive at the hospital? How will overflow be accommodated safely?

✓ EVACUATION AND SHELTER-IN-PLACE

- How will patients be evacuated if elevators are not working? Which receiving facilities have been identified for patient transfer, including difficult to place patients? How will patients be transported? How will medical records be sent with patients? Have areas been identified within the facility that patients can be moved to away from windows and other vulnerable areas if evacuation is not a safe option?

✓ POST-EVENT

- Have past emergency events been reviewed to identify deficiencies? What was identified? Have those deficiencies been addressed in planning for future emergencies?