



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

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Division of Public Health

May 24, 2024

MEMORANDUM

TO: North Carolina Immunization Program (NCIP) Participants
FROM: Carrie Blanchard *CB*
Immunization Branch Director

SUBJECT: 2024 Hurricane Season Preparedness

The 2024 Hurricane Season begins June 1, 2024, and continues through November 30, 2024. The information below will help you prepare for severe weather conditions. Conditions can vary widely depending on your location, including inland locations.

Preparation is key to successfully handling an emergency, whether it is a hurricane, unexpected power failure, or a refrigerator or freezer malfunction. If a hurricane makes landfall, the Immunization Branch will coordinate vaccine response efforts with State and Local Preparedness and Local Health Departments to deliver Tdap vaccine to locations in need. *The time to prepare for a hurricane is now.* Take the following steps and precautions to protect your vaccines before an emergency occurs.

Please review and update your routine and emergency vaccine storage and handling plans as needed. Once you're under pressure, having a written and documented plan will take guesswork out of protecting your vaccine supply. Remember that in flood-prone areas, disaster threats to your facility may continue for days after the initial storm has passed.

- Ensure staff are familiar with emergency management plans including after-hours roles and responsibilities.
- Suspend vaccination activities if possible **BEFORE** the onset of emergency conditions to allow time to prepare.
- Shelter vaccines in place, when possible.
- Move vaccines only when it is apparent you will be without power for an extended amount of time, and it is safe to do so.
- Know where you will get supplies now as it may be difficult during an emergency.

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH • IMMUNIZATION BRANCH

LOCATION: 5601 Six Forks Road, Raleigh, NC 27609
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www.ncdhhs.gov • TEL: 919-707-5550 • FAX: 919-870-4824

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

- Ensure vaccine supplies are stored off the floor to prevent damage from potential flooding.
- Create and implement a monitoring/notification system during times of inclement weather or other conditions that might cause a power outage.
- Test emergency generator(s) and review test log(s) to ensure successful operation.
- Verify enough fuel is available for generators for at least 72 hours of continuous use.
- Review vaccine transport guide(s) to verify you have appropriate packing materials to safely store vaccine temporarily.
 - [General vaccine transport guidance](#)
 - [COVID-specific guidance](#)
- Use a CDC recommended Digital Data Logger (DDL) with a current and valid Certificate of Calibration Testing to monitor temperatures.
- Place new batteries in your primary and backup digital data loggers.
- Confirm staff is up to date on Tdap vaccine.

If a power failure occurs:

- Determine the cause and estimate the time it will take to restore. Vaccines may remain inside a nonfunctioning unit as long as appropriate temperatures are maintained. Monitor your DDL to determine when additional action should be taken.
- Maintain thermal conditions, do not open the storage unit door until power is restored or it is determined that vaccines must be packed in separate storage containers and/or transported. Storage unit temperature may be maintained with the proper amount of water bottles in a refrigerator and frozen water bottles in a freezer. Have at least a case (24) of 8 or 16.9 fluid ounce frozen water bottles on-site that can be conditioned for transport.
- Prepare for your emergency procedure to shelter in place or transport after 30 minutes without power, including pre-chilling on-site coolers or notifying the emergency back-up location.
- Consider the type of vaccine being transported and the storage capacity at the back-up location.
- Monitor the data logger thermometer to ensure vaccines remain within the appropriate temperature range(s) during transport.
- Avoid freezing vaccine during transport so not to damage it.
- Exposure to temperatures outside of the recommended range may damage the immunogenicity and not be visually apparent.
- Do not wait for refrigerator temperatures to reach 8°C (46°F) or freezer temperatures to reach -15°C (5°F) to begin emergency vaccine procedures, remembering that immediate action is required when temperatures fall outside the recommended range(s).
- Document date and time vaccines were moved to the back-up location and monitor temperatures in the back-up refrigerator/freezer where vaccines are stored. Back-up storage units must adhere to the same requirements as the primary storage units.

When power is restored:

- Record the temperature in the unit as soon as possible.
- Continue to monitor temperatures until they reach the normal 2–8°C range in the refrigerator, or -15°C or colder in the freezer.
- Record duration of increased temperature exposure and maximum temperature observed.
- Separate exposed vaccine from new product and continue to store at the proper temperature(s), if possible, remembering that vaccine shipments could be suspended due to road conditions.
- Mark vaccine exposed to out-of-range temperatures with the date and time and label “DO NOT USE,” move exposed vaccine to approved, working storage unit and contact the Immunization Branch at 1-877-873-6247.

Additional guidance on vaccine storage and handling [is available from the CDC.](#)

Call the Immunization Branch at 1-877-873-6247 with questions. Note we may be closed during times of inclement weather. All voicemail messages left during closure will be returned the following business day or as soon as possible.

Regularly check our [website](#) or NCIR for announcements and up-to-date information.

Cc: SMT, IB Staff, Vaccine Manufacturers, Elizabeth Hudgins, Brian Combs, Greg Griggs, Elaine Vu, Terri Pennington, Ann Nichols, Robin Barfield