



Physician Handbook

Severe Weather



June 2011





Medical Staff:

We're pleased to present the Terrebonne General Medical Center (TGMC) *Physician Handbook for Severe Weather*. As you know, TGMC facilities and services are just as critical as local emergency management services and law enforcement when a storm threatens. Therefore, it's necessary to plan in advance for hurricanes, severe weather, and other disaster scenarios to support our patients and community so we're prepared if they occur. Every physician's participation is essential to assure we continue providing optimum care to our patients.

The Administrative Team will be the first and foremost source of information for you in planning for and in the event of any disaster. We've also provided this *Physician Handbook for Severe Weather* so you can prepare your family and household for a hurricane. In the event of a Hurricane or disaster, we may call upon you to assist with triaging, caring for or potentially evacuating your patients. We know this will be a difficult time for everyone and we commit to make every attempt to accommodate each physician's personal needs whenever possible. Remember, our patients and communities are counting on us.

The *Physician Handbook for Severe Weather* will help you better prepare for the hurricane season. In the event of a hurricane, we fully recognize that you rely on information from the hospital to plan your patients and office operations. We will make every attempt to keep you informed through direct correspondence, fax, or direct emails. Please assure that your information on file is current through the Medical Staff Office to assure updates are received. Periodic updates will be posted on the TGMC website (tgmc.com) along with a secure information page for physicians access. This page will allow posting and inquiring of detailed contact information. There will also be the telephone hotline for calling to receive storm updates or notifying TGMC of your availability or contact information at our **HOTLINE Number of (985) 873-4102 and toll free 1-888-850-6270 or call Administration at 873-4664.**

Sincerely,

Phyllis Peoples, RN, MSN, CNA, BC
President and CEO



TGMC Storm Preparation

Introduction

We understand the power of hurricanes and the impact they have on coastal communities. To help you understand how TGMC responds in the event of a hurricane or severe weather situation, we've created this *Physician Handbook for Severe Weather*. This guide is designed to inform you about what to expect during a hurricane and how our organization responds to ensure that the health needs of our community are met. Areas addressed in this guide include physician responsibility, storm communication, safety, sheltering, staffing of special needs shelters, and more. We learned lessons with each severe weather incident, so this booklet will be periodically updated.

During the approach of a hurricane, you can receive periodic updates by signing onto the TGMC web site.

- To log on go to www.TGMC.com
- Select the Hurricane link or go to Patient & Visitor's Tab on the Home page
- Go to Disaster Information Tab
- Click on Physician access icon
- The login will be your badge # (on the back side of your badge above the bar code)
- The web site will have a link to update your contact information or to leave TGMC a text message. These messages will be checked frequently.
- National and Local Information on the hurricane will be provided as well as updated hospital information

Overview

Hurricanes are a serious threat to this area and are considered to be very dangerous, disastrous and life threatening. T.G.M.C. shall always maintain a state of preparedness and a capability to mobilize its defenses to resist the damages of a storm when it is imminent that the possibility of such an event is probable.

DEFINITION of TERMS: *The following definitions describe the development cycle of a Hurricane:*

Advisory:

Details as to where the storm is located, its intensity, direction and speed of movement.

Tropical Storm Watch:

Tropical storm conditions pose a possible threat within 36 hours.

Tropical Storm Warning:

Possible sustained winds within the range of 39 to 73 MPH are expected within 24 hours.

Tropical Depression:

A closed circulation of low atmospheric pressure that blows counter-clockwise around a center at speeds less than 39 miles per hour.

Tropical Storm:

A closed circulation over tropical waters at speeds ranging from 39 to 73 miles per hour.

Hurricane Categories

| CATEGORY | WIND SPEED | STORM SURGE | DAMAGE |
|----------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1 | 74-95 MPH | 4-5 FT | Minimal |
| 2 | 96-110 MPH | 6-8 FT | Moderate |
| 3 | 111-130 MPH | 9-12 FT | Extensive |
| 4 | 131-155 MPH | 13-18 FT | Extreme |
| 5 | More than 155 MPH | More than 18 ft | Catastrophic |

Hurricane Watch:

Indicates that a hurricane is near enough that everybody in that area covered by the watch should be ready to take precautionary measures. Usually issued within 24 to 36 hours in advance of landfall.

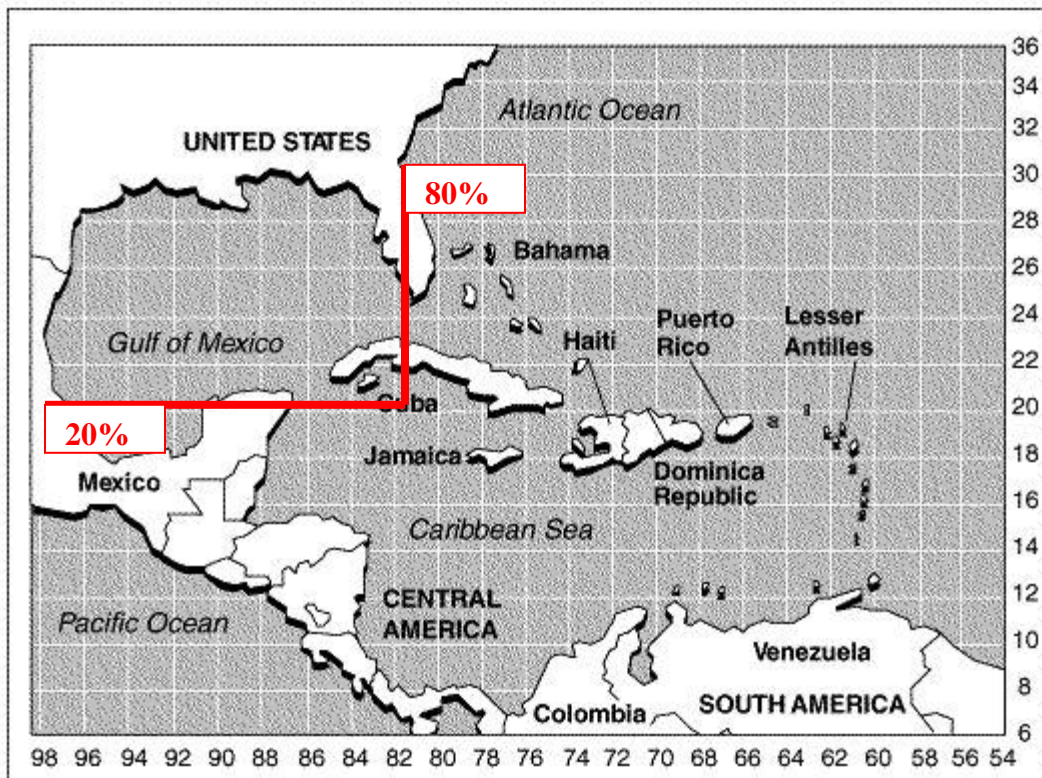
Hurricane Warning:

That sustained winds of 74 miles per hour or higher are expected in a specific coastal area within 24 hours or less. All precautions should be taken immediately.

Medical Center Preparation

PHASE 1 All storms projected for Louisiana: In phase I, the storm is approximately 650-700 miles or about 70-72 hours from landfall.

When the eye of a Tropical depression, Tropical storm or Category 1,2,3,4,or 5 Hurricane crosses 80 degrees longitude or 20 degrees north latitude

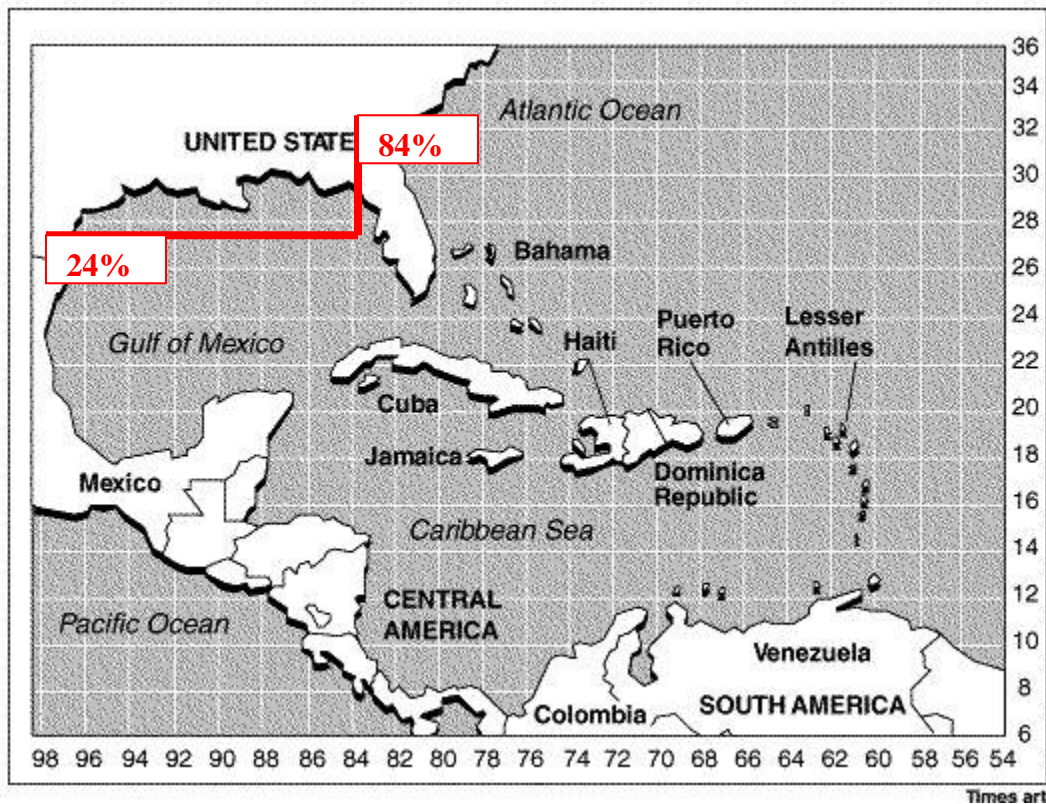


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Times art

PHASE 2 All storms projected for Louisiana. In phase II, the storm is approximately 500 miles or about 60 hours from landfall.

When the eye of a Tropical depression, Tropical storm or Category 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 Hurricane crosses 84 degrees longitude or 24 degrees north latitude.

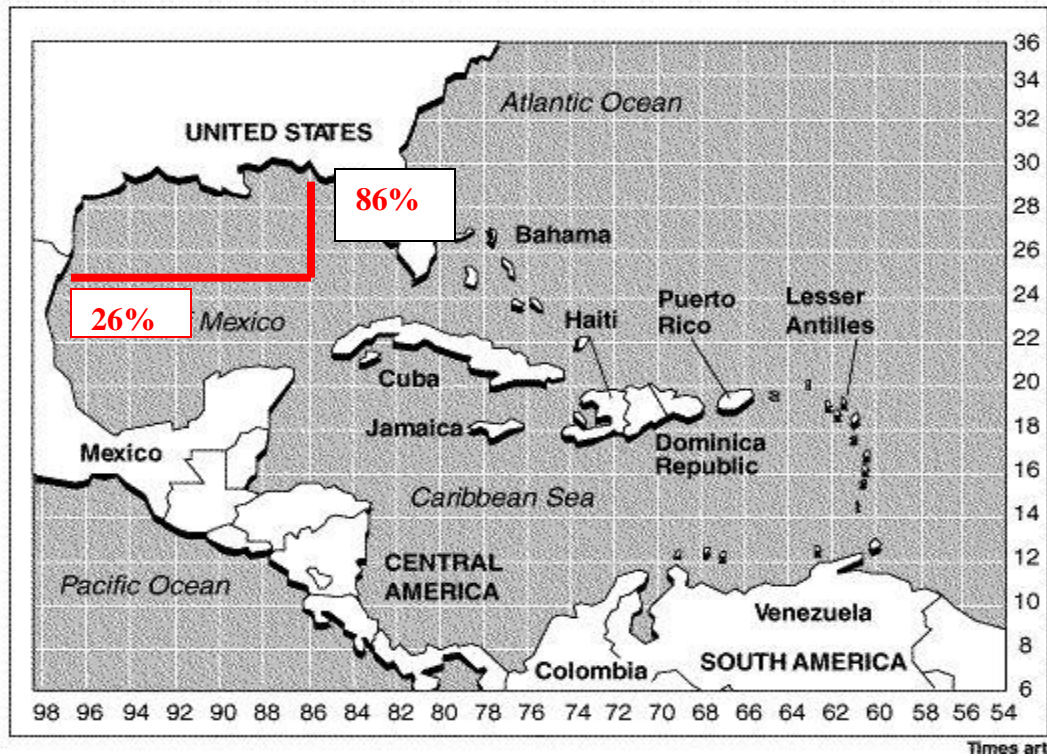


Phase 1 and 2

1. The projected path of the storm is monitored hourly by Administration.
2. Hurricane stocks including, water, food, fuel, medical supplies, and equipment will be inventoried and any orders for additional supplies will be made.
3. Facilities management department will begin the process of securing the building for wind and water. All outside areas prepared and sandbagging complete if necessary.
4. Emergency supplies, generators, and communication activated.
5. Safety officer will contact local officials to ascertain the availability of assistance by local agencies to aid in evacuation of patients if it becomes necessary.
6. NIMS command system will be initiated.
7. When the Hurricane is approximately 60 hours or 500 miles from landfall the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals require the hospital to submit the number and names of patients that may need to be evacuated by military air transport under the State's Medical Institution Evacuation Plan. The Executive Council will consider the options of evacuation (partial or full) or to shelter in place. If evacuation is deemed necessary, TGMC will coordinate with the State DHH to transfer patients to the Houma-Terrebonne Airport for evacuation.

PHASE 3 All storms projected for Louisiana. In phase III, the storm is approximately 400 miles or about 36 hours from landfall.

When the eye of a **Tropical depression, Tropical storm or Category 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 Hurricane** crosses **86 degrees longitude or 26 degrees north latitude**.



Phase 3 All storms

1. Incident command operations control center is set up in Administration and secondary Command control center is set up and tested.
2. All essential, required staff should report to their work place for assignment. Essential personal and locations will be issued emergency communication equipment.
3. All emergency communication signals are activated and all current information on position of the storm, community information, and police radio communications are monitored.
 - Final steps are taken to secure the facility.
 - The Security Department will secure Hospital buildings and access to the Hospital is to be limited to two locations.
4. Relocation of essential and potentially compromised services is determined. Evacuation of the facility may be deemed necessary and efforts to safely evacuate patient may be considered.
 - Consideration should be given for moving the following units Critical Care, Rehab, ER and Women's services.

Because of the location of the central supply, dietary, and any other department determined that would effectively be cut off from the rest of the hospital in a flood situation, provision should be made to provide units with enough supplies to last for several days. Additional supplies should be stored on the second floor of the main building.

Physicians are key in the success of hurricane preparations and planning. It is my intent that you have as much information as we do to plan and prepare for what nature may have in store for us.

TGMC has conducted multiple in-house drills to simulate total evacuation of the facility. If evacuation of the facility is deemed necessary, the evacuation process will begin as defined below;

- Evacuation teams will be assembled and identified as teams 1,2,3, and 4.
- Team 1 – patient relocation assignment
- Team 2 – patient preparation for transfer
- Team 3 – patient transfer for evacuation
- Team 4 – patient supply and information

Once the evacuation of patients is complete, all remaining staff will then evacuate the facility. A minimal number of designated staff members will remain for security of the facility during the storm.

Recovery

If the Medical Center was not evacuated, after the storm has passed and conditions are safe to be outside, the facility condition will be determined. The Emergency Management Team will assemble along with appropriate staff members, to ascertain current operational status of essential services. The team shall request information from departments on current operational effectiveness. Appropriate action shall be taken as directed by the CEO or designee to ensure a rapid and full recovery of all essential operations. Once operational recovery is under way or completed, actions shall be taken to send non-emergency staff home.

Medical Staff Information

Medical Staff Staffing for a Storm

All physicians play key roles in meeting the needs of our community when faced with a hurricane. One challenge that is faced during and following a storm is security of the facility. Precautions are taken prior to, during and following landfall to assure the safety of our patients, medical staff and employee staff members.

Unfortunately, individuals in our community may not make arrangements for evacuation or shelter and attempt to utilize the hospital. To ensure a head count of those within the facility all personnel within the building are required to wear their TGMC identification badges before entering and exiting the facility. All approved visitors will be banded using wristbands for identification.

Procedure for Identifying & Monitoring Visitors During a Hurricane

Several hours before the Parish mandated curfew, the Patient Rep, Risk Manager, and Volunteer Services Manager or designees shall make rounds to patient floors and shall secure a census list from each floor. ID bands shall be placed on one visitor per patient, and other visitors shall be reminded of the need to leave prior to the curfew. The name of the designated visitor shall be written on the ID band as well as on census list by the patient's name.

Simultaneously, security staff shall be posted at entrances to place ID bands on visitors entering the hospital. The security staff shall secure a census list from I.T. The visitor's name shall be written on the ID band and on the census list beside patient's name they are visiting.

Only one visitor shall be allowed to stay with a patient once the Parish mandated curfew is in effect. The Vice President or Assistant VP of Nursing shall approve any exceptions. Once the curfew is in effect, visitors shall be expected to remain in the patient room. Once the curfew is in effect, all doors shall be locked & visitors shall not be admitted into the building.

Due to the potential severity of hurricanes, evacuation may be necessary. Physicians that anticipate evacuating to another community or state, plans to stay at an alternative house or shelter other than home, please contact the Medical Staff Office and communicate your travel destination and contact information in advance of leaving. This would allow TGMC to be aware of physicians who may be in the community who could be called for assistance in the event of a disaster or unforeseen event.

Additionally, the TGMC Emergency Operations Center and Marketing Departments will contact the media, (HTV, and WWL television), (and Sunburst Media, 107.5, 106.3, 105.3, 96.7 FM / 1490, 1350, 1280, and 870 AM), to maintain updates on the hospital status. Additional information will also be posted on the TGMC website at tgmc.com.

Medical Staffing Protocol

Once the Medical Center's hurricane plan has been activated, the Vice President of Physician Services will coordinate the notification of physicians deemed necessary for covering the medical center. Physicians will be called upon in the following order.

- a) Physicians on NFD call
- b) Physicians who volunteer for service
- c) Physicians with patients remaining in the Medical Center who are unable to be discharged or transferred.

Physicians on the NFD call Schedule must be available for the duration of the hurricane or designate appropriate coverage. If changes are made to the coverage, the VP of Physician Services is to be notified at 873-4664. Duration is defined as during, and immediately after landfall.

Physicians who have patients in-house during an impending storm are required to be available or make arrangements to have coverage for their admitted patients.

The Medical Staff has determined in advance how many of each specialty should be in-house or available during the potential landfall of a hurricane per the NFD call schedule.

- a) Internal Medicine/Family Practice (2) minimum, potentially (3)
- b) Cardiology (1)
- c) Cardiovascular Surgeon (1)
- d) Orthopedics (1)
- e) Pediatrics (1) - Neonatology and Pediatrics coordinate coverage
- f) Neonatology (1)
- g) Radiology (1)
- h) General Surgery (1)
- i) OB/GYN (1) depending on delivery status of inpatients
- j) Anesthesiology (1) with two (2) CRNA's
- k) E.R. (2) with one NP

It is the responsibility of each physician with patients in the Medical Center to provide coverage for their patients. Those physicians who have been designated by the NFD call schedule or who have volunteered to serve during the hurricane may assume responsibility for the hospitalized patients of the other physicians in their specialty upon request of the physician if an evacuation is necessary.

All covering physicians may be asked to assist in the Emergency Department Triage Area or assist in assessing, transferring, and discharging in-house patients as necessary to assure the availability of beds for more serious patients.

It is the request that all members of the Medical Staff assist in the discharge or transfer of their patients in the event of an impending hurricane. Critical patients will be moved with the advice and consent of the attending physician when possible.

Physicians who provide services to the Medical Center during a hurricane will require relief within 48 hours after landfall by those physicians scheduled for the NFD call schedule or by medical staff volunteers who have returned to the area following landfall of the hurricane.

The Vice President of Physician Services will direct provisions for physician sleeping areas (*See Sleeping Arrangements Below*). Physicians that have been designated to cover for their specialty or offer volunteer services will be afforded sleeping arrangements. Due to safety concerns, potential flooding with limited resources, Physicians are urged to make alternate plans for family members.

The following steps will be taken in accordance with the correlating phases of the TGMC hurricane plan.

Phase 1 All storms

- Census report will be compiled identifying admitting physician, patient location and diagnosis
- Admitting Physicians will be contacted requesting assistance for possible discharge or transfer of patients
- Surgery schedule and all OP Testing and Procedures will also be evaluated at this time for consideration of upcoming volume and minimizing elective procedures
- NFD call schedule will be reviewed for potential Medical Staff coverage of the Medical Center.

Phase 2 All storms

In addition to the steps taken in phase 1

- Admitting physicians are once again contacted requesting the discharge of all eligible patients
- Possible transfer of critical patients and NICU babies
- Cancellation of elective surgeries and OP testing and procedures as warranted
- NFD call schedule has been reviewed and Medical Staff coverage for the Medical Center defined, coverage availability is validated and communicated

Phase 3 All storms

In addition to the steps taken in phases 1 & 2

- Covering physicians are asked to report to the Medical Center for assignment or confirm their availability
- Covering physicians are provided patient information allowing for the discharge of all eligible patients, the treatment of patients remaining in house
- Potential closure of the ED and potential evacuation of the facility

GENERAL ITEMS OF INTEREST/IMPORTANT PATIENT INFORMATION

Caring for Patients during the Storm

Caring for patients in the hospital, as well as those injured after hurricane landfall, requires a well-staffed facility. It is the practice of the hospital to maintain professional staff to care for those patients who require inpatient medical care and cannot be transferred or discharged. TGMC is not an evacuation site for community based medical services such as nursing homes or those persons requiring special needs. Please encourage your patients with special needs to evacuate early or contact the **Parish Office of Emergency Preparedness at 873-6357** to determine if shelters will be available in the area.

Physicians who have patients in-house during an impending storm are required to be available or make arrangements to have coverage for their admitted patients.

Special Needs Shelters

Many individuals in our community require special assistance when they're evacuated, but not the acute care that's provided in hospitals. People with special needs may include those requiring 24-hour-a-day healthcare maintenance or medical equipment that requires 24-hour-a-day electrical power. Residents with special needs must register with the Parish Office of Emergency Management before the hurricane season each year. Please have your patient's call (985) 873-6357 to register. The Office of Public Health in Thibodeaux shall coordinate the assignments for the special needs shelter. Their office number is 985-447-0916.

Dialysis Patients

Local dialysis clinics are offering the following advice for dialysis patients during hurricane season. Please convey the importance of following these guidelines to your patients.

Outpatient dialysis:

- Plan to evacuate. Dialysis clinics or units across the country accept dialysis patients during emergencies. Patients should contact their current clinic to obtain an emergency phone number to identify if there is a clinic where they intend to evacuate.
- Keep a 30-day supply of medicines, making sure you have your medicines with you.
- Keep information on your medical needs, your medical record, prescriptions, dialysis orders, and emergency contact person with you.
- Ask your local dialysis clinics for this information ahead of time so you can be prepared for the approach of a hurricane.

Inpatient dialysis:

- In the case of patient transfer, TGMC will provide a copy of the medical record, and transfer the patient to a facility offering dialysis treatment.
- The schedule of dialysis treatments may be accelerated, pre-evacuation, possibly allowing for a greater period of time between later treatments.
- There will be a dialysis nurse on call during the storm period.

Patient Admit/Discharge Criteria

It has been determined that TGMC will not be a shelter in the event of a hurricane, because of this; we ask that you support our efforts in our admission and discharge process if a catastrophic event is pending or does occur.

Our admission and discharge process for evaluation would remain unchanged. All patients that arrive to our facility as an emergency will have a medical screening exam for medical necessity and appropriate level of care. All direct admissions will be screened for severity of illness and intensity of services per InterQual criteria. An attempt will be made to notify the attending physician of failed admission criteria and to discuss a further plan of care.

Hospital-Initiated Notices/Letters of Non-Coverage (HINN) or Advance Beneficiary Notice (ABN) will be issued to patients, or their representative, when the patient does not meeting medical necessity criteria for admission, observation, continued stay and when the patient or physician are refusing discharge to appropriate level of care.

Emergency Operations Center (Squad Room)

TGMC uses the Emergency Operations Center to coordinate storm preparations and communicate with state and local emergency management officials. Preparations coordinated through their team include facility staffing, patient census, and bed availability, meals, plant operations, media as well as computer system status. Beginning 12 hours prior to the expected landfall of the storm, the Emergency Operations Center will be staffed.

Facility Safety

A common question during a hurricane or severe storm is, “How safe is the facility?” While the nature of a disaster prevents a guarantee of total safety, as healthcare workers who stay during a storm, we accept a level of risk to serve our patients and customers. TGMC does perform regular vulnerability assessments of each facility to make them as safe as possible. Experienced structural engineers assess each building’s physical strengths and weaknesses.

Sleeping Arrangements

In the event that you are staying in-house for a storm, maintaining mental alertness during a stressful situation, especially during a hurricane, is very important. Proper rest is paramount to having a sharp team, ready for anything. Because of this, respite hours and areas are assigned to all Physicians and physicians who are at the facility during the storm.

Please assure that your sleeping arrangement in house is made through the **House Supervisor’s office** at ext. 4138 or call operator for the House Supervisor in order that accurate records may be kept of location of our Physicians. Beds will be reassigned to other staff while you work.

Due to the challenges of potential flooding and lessons learned from Katrina, we ask that family members do not stay in-house but evacuate the area for safety.

Staff Coverage

Four distinct groups will be in the facility during a hurricane – each with unique circumstances. These include patients, family members, employees and physicians. A great deal of planning has been directed toward this subject and each group is addressed below.

1. Patients and their families

Patients are our primary concern and the reason we're here, so it's important to reassure them and their families during a hurricane. In the event of a storm, family members are always encouraged to seek the safety of an approved shelter. However, if requested, one family member will be allowed to stay with each patient. The family member will be banded and will be required to bring the same supplies for his or her own use, as are TGMC employees. Visiting will cease at a time to be determined by the command center and the hospital will be locked down.

2. Employees

Efforts are made for employees working during a storm to be given time before the storm to prepare their home. They are encouraged to have family members evacuate and reminded to have families bring enough food and supplies to be comfortable at their destination or shelter location for at least 72 hours.

3. Physicians

Teams of volunteer physicians help maintain the readiness of our hospitals during a hurricane. Without their assistance, we wouldn't be able to care for patients. In the event of a storm, physicians' families are always encouraged to evacuate or seek the safety of an approved shelter. However, under extreme circumstances, requests can be made to Administration for deviation of arrangements.

Reminders of what to bring if staying within the facility during a storm

When preparing to come to hospital during or after a storm, you'll need to have some essential items:

1. Your TGMC identification badge
2. A small overnight bag (do not over pack)
3. Sleeping bags, blankets, and pillows
4. A change of clothing, uniforms, and shoes
5. Personal toiletries and a towel
6. Prescription medications
7. Cash and small change
8. Nonperishable food snacks for 48 – 72 hours
9. Bottled water
10. Umbrella and rain gear

TGMC HELPFUL STORM HINTS

Preparing Your Office for a Storm

Preparing your office for a storm is much like preparing your home. Remember to protect any important documents or data bases of information, such as; patient list, accounts receivable, licenses, and any other items you may have difficulty working without or recovering after a storm.

Preparing Your Office Equipment Including Personal Computers (PCs) for a Storm

One of the first steps that should be taken in preparation for a storm is the creation of back up or reserve copies of important data. This duplication of data can become very valuable when returning after a storm. Remember to disconnect and protect personal computers, telephones, fax machines, printers, copiers and other valuable equipment within your office. Please remove all papers, books, and records from the floor or areas, which may flood.

Business Interruption

Due to the continuing fall out of the impact of the hurricanes on Louisiana businesses, it is important to keep track of coverages provided by insurance policies. Not only should property insurance policies be reviewed, but business interruption policies should be reviewed as well. Business interruption insurance provides for lost revenues when a business has been interrupted by a disaster. It assists in paying operating expenses while a business is attempting to recover. Although it does not cover dollar for dollar, it is an additional level of protection and should be reviewed several times a year.

Preparing for the Storm

There are a number of sources available with information on preparing your home or office in the event of a hurricane or severe weather. The following list will get your started.

1. Have materials ready to protect your home or office, such as storm shutters and plywood.
2. Have materials on hand to repair storm damage, including plywood and nails, a hammer and saw, plastic sheets, and duct tape. They can help prevent further damage.
3. Have emergency supplies in waterproof containers such as canned food (with a manual can opener), diapers and baby formula, water (one gallon per person per day), matches, and disposable eating utensils. Other items to have on hand include medicine and a first-aid kit, a radio with batteries, cooking equipment, a can of gasoline (fill car tanks beforehand), cash, plain bleach, a fire extinguisher, sleeping bags and blankets. Please make sure all prescription medications are filled beforehand.
4. Place valuable items or important documents in waterproof containers. Place these containers in small rooms with no windows. Raise any items that could be damaged by water as high off the floor as possible.

What about the family pet?

Pets are an important part of the family for many of us, so planning for their sheltering should also occur before an impending storm. Unfortunately, pets aren't permitted in the hospital, and public disaster shelters cannot accept pets because of health and safety regulations (except for service animals that assist people with disabilities). In the midst of a disaster, it may be impossible to find shelter for your animals – so plan now. Leaving pets behind, even if you try to create a safe place in your home, can result in them being injured or lost. Frightened animals can quickly slip out of open doors, broken windows, or damaged areas of your home left exposed by the disaster event. The following information will help you plan for your pet's care in the event of a severe storm or hurricane.

Tips on locating a safe place for your pet

1. Set up a buddy system with friends or relatives outside your area.
2. Contact hotels outside your area to check policies on accepting pets. If you have prior notice of an impending disaster, call ahead for reservations. Online you can check out www.petswelcome.com for hotels that accept pets.
3. Contact boarding kennels outside your area. Be sure to make a personal visit well in advance to make sure that it's a facility where you'll be comfortable leaving your pet.
4. Ask your veterinarian (outside the area of danger) if he or she would be able to board your pet.
5. Some local Humane Societies and pet centers will accept and house pets from areas that have been ordered to evacuate.

HURRICANE HOUSE RULES

- Follow all public address instructions as announced by the incident Emergency Operations Center.
- Water - You should have your own drinking supply. Fountains can be used until city water supply is lost, after which only bottled drinking water should be consumed. Plant Operations and Environmental Services will make water buckets available for flushing designated toilets. Under water restrictions, toilets should be flushed only when both liquid and solid wastes are present.
- Food - You should be prepared with your own supply of food and snacks for 24 hours. However, as they are able, the hospital cafeteria will serve meals at designated intervals.
- Waste Disposal – Environmental Services will provide trash bags. However, trash pick-ups may be delayed until after the storm passes.
- Stay in the facility until “ALL CLEAR” is issued. For the safety of our customers, stay in your assigned area; no wandering. Respect privacy of others and do not disturb equipment or supplies while staying temporarily in space usually designated for office or patient care environments. Do not open windows or doors.
- Valuables are the sole responsibility of the owner. Clothing/personal belongings should be controlled and secured by the owner.
- In respect of our patients and visitors, minimize noise at all times. Be considerate of others. Observe TGMC standards of performance.
- Security – Facility security will be heightened as severe weather conditions worsen. Some entrances may close sooner than usual and traffic limited as warranted. The use of wristbands may be implemented to assist with identification of approved guests.
- No smoking within the facility (no open flames of any kind). Please be aware that during the storm the doors will be locked and you will not be allowed to smoke.
- Do not tape windows (tape will damage solar/safety film).
- Pets – Pets are an important part of the family for many of us, so planning for their shelter should also occur before an impending storm. Unfortunately, pets aren’t permitted in the facility, and public disaster shelters cannot accept pets because of health and safety regulations (except for service animals that assist people with disabilities). In the midst of pending severe weather, contact your veterinarian or boarding kennels in or outside the area, or set up a buddy system with a friend or relative.

