

Incident Response Guide: Severe Weather with Warning

Mission

To provide for the safety of patients, visitors, and staff during a severe weather emergency such as ice storms, snowstorms, rain, flooding, extreme heat and cold, etc.

Directions

Read this entire response guide and review the Hospital Incident Management Team Activation chart. Use this response guide as a checklist to ensure all tasks are addressed and completed.

Objectives

- ☐ Provide for the safety of patients, staff, families, and visitors
- ☐ Initiate hospital protective actions
- ☐ Provide patient care and management

Immediate Response (0 – 2 hours)

Section	Officer	Time	Action	Initials
Command	Incident Commander		Activate Emergency Operations Plan, the Severe Weather Plan, the Hospital Incident Management Team, and Hospital Command Center. Activate the Evacuation, Shelter-in-Place, and Hospital Abandonment Plan, as needed.	
			Notify the hospital Chief Executive Officer, Board of Directors, and other appropriate internal and external officials of situation status.	
			Establish operational periods, objectives, and regular briefing schedule. Consider using the Incident Action Plan Quick Start for initial documentation of the incident.	
			Determine timeline and criteria for discontinuation of nonessential services and procedures.	
	Public Information Officer		Inform patients, staff, and families of situation status and provide regular updates.	
			Monitor media outlets for updates on the incident and possible impacts on the hospital. Communicate information via regular briefings to Section Chiefs and the Incident Commander.	
	Liaison Officer		Notify community partners in accordance with local policies and procedures (e.g., consider local Emergency Operations Center, other area hospitals, local emergency medical services, and healthcare coalition coordinator), to determine incident details, community status, estimates of casualties, and establish contacts for requesting supplies, equipment, or personnel not available in the hospital.	
			Obtain the most current and projected weather information from local and national sources.	
			Communicate with other hospitals to determine situation status, and their ability to accept patients if transferred or if a hospital evacuation is ordered.	
	Safety Officer		Advise the Infrastructure Branch regarding hospital hardening and protective measures.	
			Recommend safe areas for immediate shelter-in-place to protect life.	

			Monitor for the safe shelter-in-place of patients, staff, and visitors.	
			Initiate HICS 215A to assign, direct, and ensure safety actions are adhered to and completed.	
			Evaluate safety issues related to current patient care services, hospital census, and operational considerations for next 24 hours.	

Immediate Response (0 – 2 hours)				
Section	Branch/Unit	Time	Action	Initials
Operations	Section Chief		Determine if personnel and resources are available to successfully complete the Incident Action Plan. If not, contact Logistics for additional personnel or resources.	
	Medical Care Branch Director		Assess patients for risk and prioritize care and resources, as appropriate.	
			At the storm's onset, evacuate any patients, staff and visitors from impacted areas to safety.	
			Identify evacuation priorities and transfer requirements.	
			Assess the impact of the storm on continued outpatient services; determine the need for cancellations or rescheduling.	
			Assess the impact of the storm on home care services and the need to cancel visits, the movement of patients to inpatient hospitals, and subsequent impact on health status.	
			Review evacuation policy and procedures and determine whether identified evacuation sites are feasible in consideration of storm, transportation routes, and resources for movement.	
	Infrastructure Branch Director		Implement emergency plans and procedures as needed (heating, ventilation and air conditioning, utilities, communications, etc.).	
			Oversee the immediate stabilization of the hospital infrastructure and initiate protective measures.	
			Maintain utilities and communications with service providers, activating alternate systems as needed.	

			Implement emergency support procedures to sustain critical services (i.e., power, water, medical gases and communications).	
	Security Branch Director		Secure the hospital and implement restricted access procedures.	
	Business Continuity Branch Director		Initiate Business Continuity Plans and procedures.	
Planning	Section Chief		Establish operational periods, incident objectives, and develop the Incident Action Plan in collaboration with the Incident Commander.	
	Resources Unit Leader		Gather internal situation status including supply and equipment status, and current staff and visitor census.	
	Situation Unit Leader		Activate HICS 254 for patients and injured visitors that are relocated to another hospital during and after the storm.	
			Gather internal situation status including patient census and bed status.	
			Identify potential discharges, in coordination with Operations Section.	
			Assess the community impact of the storm to determine direct and indirect effects on staff, transportation, power, etc.	
Logistics	Section Chief		Refer to the Job Action Sheet for appropriate tasks.	
	Service Branch Director		Implement emergency support procedures to sustain communications and information technology.	
			Obtain and distribute food and water to sustain operations.	
	Support Branch Director		Obtain and distribute supplies, equipment, medications to sustain operations.	
Finance/ Administration	Section Chief		Refer to the Job Action Sheet for appropriate tasks.	
	Time Unit Leader		Implement established pay codes for personnel to track hours associated with storm.	

Intermediate and Extended Response (2 to greater than 12 hours)

Section	Officer	Time	Action	Initials
Command	Incident Commander		Evaluate the hospital's capability to provide safe patient care and need for evacuation.	
	Public Information Officer		Conduct briefings to patients, staff, and persons seeking shelter as well as the media to provide updates on storm and hospital status.	
			Coordinate risk communication messages with the Joint Information Center, if able.	
			Address social media issues as warranted; use social media for messaging as situation dictates.	
	Liaison Officer		Maintain contact with the local Emergency Operations Center, other area hospitals, local emergency medical services, and regional medical health coordinator to relay status and critical needs and to receive storm and community updates.	
	Safety Officer		Continue to monitor weather reports and conditions.	
			Communicate potentially unsafe conditions to the Incident Commander for evaluation for continuation of care or closure.	
			Maintain the safety of patients, staff, families and individuals seeking shelter to the best possible extent.	
			Update the HICS 215A as required.	

Intermediate and Extended Response (2 to greater than 12 hours)

Section	Branch/Unit	Time	Action	Initials
Operations	Section Chief		Continue or implement evacuation or shelter-in-place, as needed.	
			Ensure that all documentation, including damage assessments, repair costs and tracking materials are submitted to the Planning Section.	

	Medical Care Branch Director		<p>If partial (lateral or vertical) evacuation is required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare and ensure transfer of patient records, medications, and valuables to transfer location <input type="checkbox"/> Provide patient information as appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> If evacuation is from secondary fire or explosion, evacuation must be to a fire compartment at least two compartments away (horizontally or vertically) from the fire or explosion <input type="checkbox"/> Reassign personnel to ensure adequate staffing in area receiving patients <p>If complete evacuation is required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Prioritize areas for evacuation based on Safety Officer's evaluation of the threat to life <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare and ensure transfer of patient records, medications, and valuables to holding or assembly area <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm transfer and timeline with receiving hospital, providing patient information as appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Establish safe holding or assembly area to place patients, patient belongings, and staff until transferred <input type="checkbox"/> Reassign staff to accompany patients to alternate locations to ensure adequate staffing for patient care 	
			Maintain patient care services, including those provided in evacuation sites.	
			Monitor patients and visitors for adverse effects on health and for psychological stress.	
	Infrastructure Branch Director		Conduct regular hospital and infrastructure evaluations and assessments and respond immediately to damage or problems.	
	Security Branch Director		Continue hospital security and maintain restricted access; determine the need for expansion.	
	Patient Family Assistance Branch Director		Assist with the notification of patients' families regarding the situation and inform them of the likelihood of evacuation, if required.	
			Determine the need to provide shelter and support for families and dependents of patients.	

Planning	Section Chief		Continue operational periods, incident objectives, and revise the Incident Action Plan in collaboration with the Incident Commander. Ensure that updated information and intelligence is incorporated into the Incident Action Plan.	
			Ensure the Demobilization Plan is being readied.	
	Resources Unit Leader		Continue patient and bed tracking.	
	Situation Unit Leader		Continue to monitor situation status and update status boards.	
			Continue staff and equipment tracking.	
	Documentation Unit Leader		Collect and collate completed documentation of actions, decisions, and activities.	
	Demobilization Unit Leader		Prepare for demobilization and system recovery.	
Logistics	Section Chief		Refer to the Job Action Sheet for appropriate tasks.	
	Service Branch Director		Provide for continuing communication systems and information technology functionality.	
			Continue to obtain and distribute food and water to sustain operations. Route requests for additional resources not available in the hospital through the Liaison Officer to outside agencies.	
	Support Branch Director		Continue to obtain needed supplies, equipment, and medications. Route requests for additional resources not available in the hospital through the Liaison Officer to outside agencies.	
			Obtain supplemental staffing, as needed, and continue to provide staff for patient care and evacuation.	
			Monitor staff for adverse effects on health and for psychological stress; provide behavioral health support services for staff.	
			Consider providing family members and dependents a secure haven during the severe weather event.	
			Monitor, report, follow up on, and document staff or patient injuries.	

			Provide transportation services for internal operations and patient evacuation.	
Finance/ Administration	Section Chief		Refer to the Job Action Sheet for appropriate tasks.	
	Time Unit Leader		Implement established pay codes for personnel to track hours associated with the storm.	
			Continue to track hours associated with the emergency response.	
	Procurement Unit Leader		Facilitate procurement of supplies, etc., in cooperation with Logistics Support Branch.	
	Compensation / Claims Unit Leader		Begin to collect, when safe, documentation of structural and infrastructure damage and initiate reimbursement and claims procedures.	
	Cost Unit Leader		Track and monitor all expenditures, response, storm damage, and repair costs.	
			Track estimates of lost revenue due to hospital storm damage and response.	

Demobilization/System Recovery				
Section	Officer	Time	Action	Initials
Command	Incident Commander		Determine hospital status and declare termination of the incident.	
			Approve the Demobilization Plan.	
	Public Information Officer		Conduct a final media briefing and assist with updating patients, staff, families, and persons seeking shelter of termination of incident.	
	Liaison Officer		Communicate the final hospital status and termination of the incident to the regional medical health coordinator, the local Emergency Operations Center, area hospitals, local emergency medical services, and officials.	
			Assist with the repatriation of transferred patients.	
			Assist with updating key stakeholders and others of the termination of the incident.	

	Safety Officer		Monitor and maintain a safe environment during the return to normal operations.	
			Ensure applicable regulatory agencies are notified of alterations in life safety, safe workplace issues, or environment of care issues.	

Demobilization/System Recovery				
Section	Branch/Unit	Time	Action	Initials
Operations	Section Chief		Refer to the Job Action Sheet for appropriate tasks.	
	Medical Care Branch Director		With Planning Section, reschedule canceled surgeries, procedures, elective admissions, and outpatient appointments.	
			Repatriate transferred patients, if applicable.	
			Provide behavioral health support and information about community services to patients and families, as needed.	
	Infrastructure Branch Director		Monitor that fire doors and alarms are in working order.	
			Conduct or continue damage assessment surveys.	
			Ensure completion of hospital repairs and coordinate with Planning and Finance/Administration Sections.	
			Complete the hospital damage report, progress of repairs, and estimated timelines for restoration of the hospital to pre-incident condition.	
	Security Branch Director		Monitor that entry and exit points are open and functioning.	
	Business Continuity Branch Director		If record keeping included use of paper based records, ensure all clinical information is entered into electronic medical records.	
	Patient Family Assistance Branch Director		Notify families of repatriated patients or patients permanently transferred to other hospitals.	
Planning	Section Chief		Finalize and distribute the Demobilization Plan.	

			Conduct debriefings and hot wash with: <input type="checkbox"/> Command Staff and section personnel <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative personnel <input type="checkbox"/> All staff <input type="checkbox"/> All volunteers	
			Write an After Action Report and Corrective Action and Improvement Plan for submission to the Incident Commander, including: <input type="checkbox"/> Summary of the incident <input type="checkbox"/> Summary of actions taken <input type="checkbox"/> Actions that went well <input type="checkbox"/> Actions that could be improved <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendations for future response actions	
	Documentation Unit Leader		Collect, collate, file, and secure completed documentation of actions, decisions, and activities.	
			Prepare a summary of the status and location of all incident patients, staff, and equipment. After approval by the Incident Commander, distribute it to appropriate external agencies.	
	Demobilization Unit Leader		Ensure that issues impacting clinical and support operations are relayed to appropriate sections for resolution.	
			Implement the Demobilization Plan.	
Logistics	Section Chief		Release temporary staff and other personnel to normal positions.	
			Inventory all Hospital Command Center and hospital supplies and replenish as necessary, appropriate, and available.	
	Service Branch Director		Monitor and assist with restoration of communications and Information Technology Services.	
	Support Branch Director		Restock supplies, equipment, medications, food and water to pre-incident inventories.	
			Complete documentation and follow up of personnel injury or line-of-duty death as appropriate.	
Finance/ Administration	Section Chief		Review the summary of final response and recovery costs, expenditures and estimated lost revenues; submit to the Planning Section Chief for inclusion in the After Action Report.	

	Compensation / Claims Unit Leader		Contact insurance carriers to initiate reimbursement and claims procedures.	
			Coordinate with Risk Management for additional insurance and documentation needs, including images of damages.	
	Cost Unit Leader		Compile a final summary of response and recovery costs, expenditures, and estimated lost revenues; submit it to the Finance Section Chief.	

Documents and Tools

Emergency Operations Plan, including:

- ☐ Severe Weather Plan
- ☐ Evacuation, Shelter-in-Place, and Hospital Abandonment Plan
- ☐ Employee Health Monitoring and Treatment Plan
- ☐ Patient, staff, and equipment tracking procedures
- ☐ Hospital damage assessment procedures
- ☐ Business Continuity Plan
- ☐ Behavioral Health Support Plan
- ☐ Security Plan
- ☐ Fatality Management Plan
- ☐ Utility Failure Plan
- ☐ Emergency Patient Registration Plan
- ☐ Hospital and campus maps, blueprints and floor plans
- ☐ Discharge Policy
- ☐ Emergency Procurement Policy
- ☐ Volunteer Utilization Plan
- ☐ Risk Communication Plan
- ☐ Interoperable Communications Plan
- ☐ Demobilization Plan

Forms, including:

- ☐ HICS Incident Action Plan (IAP) Quick Start
- ☐ HICS 200 – Incident Action Plan (IAP) Cover Sheet
- ☐ HICS 201 – Incident Briefing
- ☐ HICS 202 – Incident Objectives
- ☐ HICS 203 – Organization Assignment List
- ☐ HICS 205A – Communications List
- ☐ HICS 214 – Activity Log
- ☐ HICS 215A – Incident Action Plan (IAP) Safety Analysis
- ☐ HICS 221 – Demobilization Check-Out
- ☐ HICS 251 – Facility System Status Report
- ☐ HICS 253 – Volunteer Registration
- ☐ HICS 254 – Disaster Victim/Patient Tracking
- ☐ HICS 255 – Master Patient Evacuation Tracking

Job Action Sheets

Access to hospital organization chart

Television/radio/internet to monitor news

Telephone/cell phone/satellite phone/internet/amateur radio/2-way radio for communication

Hospital Incident Management Team Activation: Severe Weather with Warning

Position	Immediate	Intermediate	Extended	Recovery
Incident Commander	X	X	X	X
Public Information Officer	X	X	X	X
Liaison Officer	X	X	X	X
Safety Officer	X	X	X	X
Operations Section Chief	X	X	X	X
Medical Care Branch Director	X	X	X	X
Infrastructure Branch Director	X	X	X	X
Security Branch Director	X	X	X	X
Business Continuity Branch Director	X	X	X	X
Patient Family Assistance Branch Dir.		X	X	X
Planning Section Chief	X	X	X	X
Resources Unit Leader	X	X	X	X
Situation Unit Leader	X	X	X	X
Documentation Unit Leader		X	X	X
Demobilization Unit Leader		X	X	X
Logistics Section Chief	X	X	X	X
Service Branch Director	X	X	X	X
Support Branch Director	X	X	X	X
Finance /Administration Section Chief	X	X	X	X
Time Unit Leader	X	X	X	X
Procurement Unit Leader		X	X	X
Compensation/Claims Unit Leader		X	X	X
Cost Unit Leader		X	X	X