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

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| **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. |  |

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| **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. |  |

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| **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 215Aas required. |  |

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| **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** |  | If partial (lateral or vertical) evacuation is required:   * Prepare and ensure transfer of patient records, medications, and valuables to transfer location * Provide patient information as appropriate * 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 * Reassign personnel to ensure adequate staffing in area receiving patients   If complete evacuation is required:   * + - Prioritize areas for evacuation based on Safety Officer's evaluation of the threat to life     - Prepare and ensure transfer of patient records, medications, and valuables to holding or assembly area     - Confirm transfer and timeline with receiving hospital, providing patient information as appropriate     - Establish safe holding or assembly area to place patients, patient belongings, and staff until transferred     - 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. |  |

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| **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. |  |

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| **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:   * Command Staff and section personnel * Administrative personnel * All staff * All volunteers |  |
|  | Write an After Action Report and Corrective Action and Improvement Plan for submission to the Incident Commander, including:   * Summary of the incident * Summary of actions taken * Actions that went well * Actions that could be improved * 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. |  |

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| **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

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| **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 |
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| **Logistics Section Chief** | X | X | X | X |
| Service Branch Director | X | X | X | X |
| Support Branch Director | X | X | X | X |
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| **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 |