





Buffalo Blizzard 2022:
Impacts, Experiences and Opportunities

*Prepared for the HTC Monthly Webinar Series
BP54 - November 2023*


Speakers:




Dana Notaro, Administrator
Executive Director
Elderwood Village at Bassett Park
Elderwood Village at St. Gregory Court



Lawrence Piselli, MBA, LNHA
Executive Director
Elderwood at Cheektowaga Campus



Susan Robinson
Vice President of Risk Management
Elderwood Administrative Services, LLC





Agenda:

- Organizational Background/WNY Footprint
- Storm Preparations
- Overall Storm Impacts
- Location Experiences
- Post-Storm Challenges
- Future Considerations



Organizational Background

Our network of senior living and skilled nursing communities provide a full spectrum of services and levels of care to those we serve.

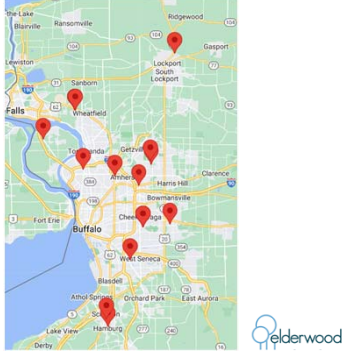
- Independent Living Facilities
- Assisted Living Facilities
- Subacute Rehabilitation/Skilled Nursing Facilities
- Skilled Pediatric Care Services – inpatient and medical day care
- Ancillary Services: Retail Pharmacies, Transportation, Health Plan



Locations Impacted

20 locations across Erie & Niagara Counties:

- 8 SNF
- 8 ALF
- 2 ILF
- 2 Ancillary Services



Storm Preparations

In the days leading up to the onset, facility preparation included:

- Early communication!
- Review & familiarization of disaster plans
- Arrangements made for early delivery of food, pharmaceutical, med surg, & cleaning supplies
- Alternate appointments scheduled for residents (i.e. medical appointments, dialysis)
- Generators tested and tank/reserve fuel replenished as necessary
- Snow removal equipment started & refueled; extra fuel obtained



Storm Preparations, cont'd

- Facility transport vehicles prepped
- Staff volunteers willing to stay (and came prepared)
- Staff with 4x4 vehicles identified
- Vacant rooms/areas prepped for staff use/overnight stays



And then it hit...




Overall Storm Impacts (& Challenges)




- Staffing
 - ✓ Staff inability to commute or reluctance to come in
 - ✓ Stranded staff – rotation of shifts, sleeping arrangements/time
 - ✓ Reopening of roads/perception of being able to get through; balancing staff leaving with resident care needs
- Resident supply delivery delays & cancellations
- Loss of electricity &/or heat
- Water leaks
- Call Bell System issues/failures
- Snow removal equipment – stopped functioning or not effective






Overall Storm Impacts, cont'd

- Need for food prep/service for staff meals for all three shifts
- Some locations needed additional food and personal supplies for staff
- Staff lacking proper cold weather clothing
- Implementation/Timing of Driving Bans
- EMS/Fire Department(s)/Mortuary Services - Delayed response or inability to respond



Elderwood at Cheektowaga Campus



Independent Living (Patio Homes)



- ✓ At the storm's onset, an electricity outage occurred at the campus
- ✓ Patio homes do not have generators, homes lost heat and evacuation appeared imminent, complicated by several COVID-19+ tenants in patio homes
- ✓ As fire department arrived to begin evacuations the power returned


Assisted Living & Skilled Nursing Facilities

- ✓ When power returned, the generator transfer panel for these buildings was severely damaged with the surge, rendering all circuits inoperable, including heat, elevators, and any circuits attached to emergency power. If power was lost again, the generator would not have functioned, and the facility would had a complete power loss.

Equipment Breakdown Issues

- ✓ Generator transfer panel
- ✓ Snow removal equipment








Elderwood Villages at Bassett Park & St Gregory Court

Assisted Living Facilities

- ✓ Key staff planned to stay onsite for the storm duration
- ✓ Delayed egress doors disabled due to power outages & intermittent generator operation
- ✓ High winds caused activation of door alarms, creating multiple false alarms
- ✓ Minimal personnel care supplies available for staff
- ✓ Additional blankets / bed coverings were needed

Ancillary Services

Woodmark Pharmacy of New York & Elderwood Transportation, LLC

- ✓ Pharmacy staff in building filling orders/prescriptions
- ✓ Pharmacy Drivers – on the road and on stand-by to deliver needed/critical medications
- ✓ Storm arrived sooner than forecasted, visibility 0%, stranding 20+ staff
- ✓ High winds blew snow over from the Buffalo International airport
- ✓ Limited resources (vending machines, desk snacks, protein drinks)
- ✓ Took in stranded motorists
- ✓ Difficulties with snow removal – contractor & equipment issues



Challenges in the aftermath

- Clearing of entrances/egresses/parking lots
- Snow removal equipment & cold weather gear
- Availability of Contractors with large equipment or equipment breakdown
- Inability of staff to arrive after driving bans lifted (many roads remained impassable)
- Staff wanting to leave immediately when driving bans lifted



Future Considerations



- Assessment and evaluation of all snow removal equipment in Summer months
- Consider expanding storage of supplies from 3 days to 5 days
- Ensure adequate food and personal supplies for staff
- Educate all staff on TV usage, phone systems, supply refilling
- Pre-planned Activities and Activity packets for residents
- Ways to overcome staffing challenges when storms are forecasted
- Provide staff with scheduled sleep time & breaks to ensure reduced stress and exhaustion
- Utilize Managers/Department Heads remotely for tasks (i.e. family/staff communications)



Future Considerations, cont'd

- Staff education re: Winter Preparedness:
 - ✓ Keep a "grab bag" with personal items in car/locker (i.e. jackets, boots, gloves, hat, scarf, extra clothes)
 - ✓ Bring needed supplies with you (i.e. personal medications)
- Additional and various types of phone chargers
- Conduct daily/shift head counts of staff and residents to ensure all are accounted for



Conclusion

- Early preparation and communication are key!
- Ensure disaster plans are updated and staff familiar with them.
- Be prepared for the unexpected to occur!

Thank you to all our dedicated and loyal staff who ensure the health, safety and well being of each resident that we serve.