

Evacuate or Shelter-in-Place Decision Guide

It is imperative that all hospitals have an evacuation plan. Category 4 or 5 Hurricanes are catastrophic in nature. Hospitals in the projected path of a Category 4 or 5 storm will need to strongly consider evacuation. In some cases, hospitals may need to evacuate for a Category 1 storm. This is dependent on your facility's location and specific vulnerabilities.

Decisions regarding what category storm you should plan to evacuate for can be made in advance of an event. The results of your hazard vulnerability analysis, the emergency management system, community infrastructure and resources where your facility is located, and the information below may assist you with making this determination.

When making the decision to evacuate or shelter-in-place, consider the following (**this list is not all-inclusive*):

- Nature of the event
 - What is the expected duration of the event?
 - What is the scope of the event? How broad of an area is expected to be impacted? (*Note: Given the size of New Jersey, it is likely that a hurricane will impact the entire state. Also, due to the uncertainty of the exact path and how far reaching the storm may be, it is likely that all facilities in the state will need to take preparedness measures.*)
 - What threats does the event pose to your facility?
 - What were the results of your facility's hazard vulnerability analysis relative to the event/potential threats?
- Location of facility
 - Is your facility in a flood plane?
 - What is the expected storm surge associated with the storm? Is your facility in the storm surge zone?
- Integrity of facility based on facility assessments in respect to the effects of hurricanes (*Please see Appendix J for additional resources on Building Safety*).
 - What is the structural integrity of the building? Has it been rated for safety relative to sustained wind speeds? If so, what is the safety rating and what are the expected wind speeds of the approaching storm?
 - Are the windows of your facility protected from wind-borne debris either with storm shutters or have storm windows with impact glass been installed?
- Availability of supplies pre & post event
 - Will you be able to access supplies post event?
 - What is the length of time your facility can be self-sufficient without utilities and having sustained minor damage? Can your facility remain self-sufficient until outside resources will again be accessible? (*Note: the more intense the storm and the larger the area the storm impacts, the longer you will need to remain self-sufficient*)
- Impact on staff
 - Will staff be able to rotate shifts?
 - Will staff be able to stay at the hospital while they are not on duty?
 - What is the potential for major roadways to be flooded to and from your facility? Will staff be able to travel on roads to and from the facility pre & post event?
- Impact on patients
 - What is the potential impact on standards of care due to the event?
 - Will you be able to sufficiently support the patient population in your facility with reduced operational capacity?

If it is appropriate for your facility to evacuate for a storm, evacuation plans need to consider for the following (**this list is not all-inclusive*):

- Plan in concert with local and state emergency management as appropriate
- Transportation of patients
 - Consider including the use of air assets for transporting patients
 - Consider transporting patients out of state
 - Be prepared to transport staff to multiple hospitals
- Patient Tracking
 - Consider use of different color arm bands to designate triage level for transport
- Patient records transfer
 - Consider developing a patient evacuation checklist that includes basic patient information, medications, current diagnosis & treatment, physician name and contact information, etc.
 - Consider providing patient medications for transfer and establish procedures for doing so.
- Staff Assignments and Logistics
 - Will staff travel with patients? Will staff stay and work at accepting facility?
 - Staff transportation, lodging, etc
 - Staff privileges and licensure reciprocity with other states
- Mutual Aid Agreements and contracts for needed services and resources

Resources:

National Criteria for Evacuation Decision-making in Nursing Homes

<http://www.fhca.org/news/evacsurvey.pdf>

GAO-06-443R, Disaster Preparedness: Preliminary Observations on the Evacuation of Hospitals and Nursing Homes Due to Hurricanes

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06443r.pdf>