



Hurricane Response Actions

For Administrators

Hurricanes pose a significant threat to the safety, well-being, and continuity of operations for healthcare facilities located in coastal areas. This Hurricane Response Actions document is divided into three sections, each addressing a specific phase of hurricane response: actions to take at the start of the hurricane season, when a hurricane watch or warning is issued, and during a hurricane event.

This document is intended to support clinic or health center administrators, managers, and/or the designated Weather Resilience Lead(s) to ensure their clinics are ready to protect the health and safety of their patients and staff during a hurricane.

Start of hurricane season

- Regularly monitor the National Hurricane Center (see **Weather Hazard Monitoring**).
- Review and verify your clinic's insurance policy to ensure adequate coverage for severe weather damage and repairs. There may be distinct policies or coverage based on the type and cause of damage. It is critical to understand the policy deductibles, coverage limits, and any exclusions in the policy.
- If your clinic or health center owns the property where it operates, pre-identify at least 2 companies that could conduct a professional assessment for flood and wind damage. If a single company cannot cover the full range of assessment services, identify multiple companies that together could do a complete safety assessment.
 - Companies should be licensed, insured, and experienced in assessing damage at healthcare facilities.
 - Sign an MoU where appropriate. The MoU should outline the scope of services, response times, and any associated fees.
 - Put companies' contact information (and agreement, when applicable) in the partner contact information section of the clinic's emergency preparedness plan.
- If the clinic or health center owns the property, pre-identify a restoration team that can conduct necessary repairs. As above, multiple companies may be required to cover specialties such as structural safety, mold remediation, and HVAC systems. Ensure restoration companies are licensed, insured, and experienced with healthcare facilities.
- If your clinic or health center site is leased property, verify with the property manager who is responsible for hiring and paying assessment professionals and who is financially responsible for repair work. Discuss emergency preparedness plans and coordination with the property manager.
- Check the lease to understand whether the clinic will be required to pay rent during the restoration process.
- Ensure digital backup of patient records, if possible. Backups should be stored securely off-site or in the cloud to ensure accessibility in case of damage to the clinic systems. Patient records must meet HIPAA requirements.
- Considering stocking up on essential supplies, as hurricane impacts to transportation infrastructure can disrupt or delay supply delivery.

To mitigate damage to your facility, consider:

- Installing excess flow valves in the plumbing system (if not already in place). These will shut off water in the event of a burst pipe and will help mitigate water damage.
- Installing a sewer backflow valve (if not already in place) to prevent sewage from backing up through drainpipes into the facility during a flood.
- Placement of essential items for storage in safe locations. (For example, don't store generators in a basement that might flood).
- When upgrading the facility, consider building materials that provide greater damage resistance.
- Proactively removing any trees or tree limbs near the facility that may fall during high winds.

When a hurricane watch or warning is issued

Hurricanes forecasting models can often predict impact zones within 72 hours of projected landfall. Evacuation requirements may necessitate taking action even earlier. Consider the following actions when hurricanes are projected to impact your clinic or health center:

- Securing any outdoor equipment or furniture that may cause damage during high winds.
- Make sure gutters and drains are clear from debris.
- Reschedule patient visits and work with clinical staff to identify referral sources for patients in the event of an extended closure of the clinic/facility (this becomes more critical the more essential/timely the service is arranging for alternate dialysis locations and/or extra pre-storm dialysis sessions can be lifesaving).
- Consider transferring the main phone line to an on-call phone. This will allow clinicians to answer health-related questions or direct patients to available resources while the clinic is closed.
- Prepare to close the facility if told to evacuate.
- Ask clinical staff whether they may want to volunteer at local evacuation shelters. If so, connect them with the local Red Cross office or emergency management agency.

During a hurricane event

- Expect to close during a hurricane as transportation to and from your facility will be dangerous. Minimizing damage and preparing for the recovery process can help reduce the amount of time your facility is closed.
- Follow local emergency management guidance, alerts, and orders.
- After the hurricane, please refer to the **Guidance and Checklist for Facility Repair and Re-Entry After Storms and Flooding** document for guidance.

Notes:
