
Vaccine Storage Considerations during Hurricane Sandy

To: Vaccines for Children Practices and Vaccines for Adults Practices
From: Immunization Program

Provider practices may consider moving refrigerator vaccines to their emergency back up location, but only if that site has a back up generator:

- Call the site first to assure they have storage capacity.
- Do not expose the vaccines directly to ice packs. Use insulation between ice packs and vaccine.
- Do not move varicella or zoster vaccine.
- Review your Health Department-approved vaccine management plan prior to moving vaccine.

Recommendations for provider practice on-site vaccine storage when a power outage is anticipated:

- Clear the memory on the state-supplied thermometer each evening the facility is open. This will designate a time frame for the Minimum and Maximum temperatures.
- Store MMR vaccine (not diluent) in the freezer instead of the refrigerator. This live vaccine has the shortest tolerance to too warm temperatures. Storing it in the freezer will extend the time it remains cold. To avoid vaccine administration errors, be sure to clearly mark or separate from varicella vaccine.
- Store ice packs in the freezer. If the power fails, the freezer will be used as a cooler and the ice packs will extend the time it stays cold. Keep the door shut.
- Store water jugs in the fridge door, crisper bins and on shelves if there's room. Do not stuff so full as to block air circulation. If the power fails, the fridge will be used as a cooler and the cold water will extend the time the unit stays cold.
- When ice packs or cold water are initially put into fridges or freezers there will be some fluctuation of temperature as the unit adjusts and brings them to temp. The thermometer should not need adjusting. Allow the unit to adjust itself. Keep the door shut.

After the power comes back on:

- Keep the doors shut.
- Record the time and current temperature. Write down the minimum and maximum temperatures recorded.
- Calculate the amount of time the power was out.
- If the temperatures were out of range (2C - 8C fridge, warmer than -15C freezer), call the Immunization Program at 1-800-640-4374.
- Do not assume the vaccines are no longer viable. Do not use the vaccines until you've spoken to the Immunization Program.

Provider Practice Emergency Plan:

http://www.healthvermont.gov/hc/imm/documents/vaccine_mgmt_plan_template.pdf