THREAT ANALYSIS

Cold weather and power emergencies affect hospitals and healthcare facilities

Last week, extreme cold temperatures in Indianapolis led to school closures and a reduction of local services. Additionally, a downed line resulted in a power outage, temporarily leaving 1,450 residents without electricity. Individually, these situations can have an impact on hospitals and healthcare facilities. Together, they can have an even more serious effect. (Sources: Indianapolis Star, WTHR)

Power outages disrupt many regular hospital activities and can necessitate appointment cancellations and facility closures. While outages happen unexpectedly due to accidents or mechanical failures, they are also caused by extreme weather, including the snow, ice storms and high winds of winter. Winter outages may be compounded as more patients seek emergency care due to cold exposure or just as refuge from the weather. (Source: PLOS Currents Disasters)

Hospitals should coordinate with community partners in identifying shelters during extreme cold. Healthcare facilities that serve as warming centers themselves must be vigilant to prevent the spread of disease, an especially relevant concern during a heavy flu season. (Source: WSILTV.com)

ACTION STEPS

Review and evaluate your facility’s level of preparedness for a power outage. A checklist from Healthcare and Public Health Sector Coordinating Councils can assist in identifying specific processes
and procedures that must be in place to be fully prepared.

Be prepared to treat complications of cold exposure, such as hypothermia and frostbite, and partner with city, community, and public health groups to respond to the needs of the public during a cold weather emergency. (Source: Baltimore City Health Department)

Separate sick and infectious patients from healthy individuals that are staying at a healthcare facility used as a warming center to reduce spread of disease. (Source: WSILTV.com)

UPCOMING EVENTS

THURSDAY

15 No Mass Gatherings Scheduled

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