

FRANCES MAHON DEACONESS HOSPITAL
621 3rd St. So.
Glasgow, MT 59230

DEPARTMENT: Environment of Care

PROCEDURE: EOC-243

SUBJECT: Severe Weather Procedure

PURPOSE: To supplement the facility-wide Emergency Operations Plan and to outline special challenges related to a weather event that impacts the facility's ability to carry out normal operations, and to provide detailed procedures to be implemented when severe weather occurs and/or shelter-in-place is needed.

RESPONSIBILITY:

- All Staff

MITIGATIONS:

- FMDH has an emergency generator system in the event that a severe weather event interrupts normal utility functions.
- Underground tanks are available.
- Surge boxes have been installed on sensitive equipment to minimize damage from storm caused power surges.
- Annually through the Environment of Care Committee's Hazardous Vulnerability, the facility will prioritize its response needs related to severe weather including tornados.

PREPAREDNESS:

- Frances Mahon Deaconess Hospital (FMDH) has an emergency generator system in the event that a tornado or severe thunderstorm interrupts normal utility functions.
- Underground tanks are available.
- Annually, through the Environment of Care Committee's Hazardous Vulnerability Analysis, the facility will prioritize its response needs related to severe weather including tornados.
- Training/Education:
 - All employees will receive training regarding the Emergency Operations Plan and the identified disaster vulnerabilities annually through the facility wide Health Stream training. Specific training relevant to severe weather events will be conducted at All Staff Meetings as appropriate.
- Contacts:

Northwestern Energy	(888) 467-2353
Montana-Dakota Utilities (MDU)	(800) 638-3278
Glasgow Water Department	Cell#: 406-263-7614
- Supplies:

- Each Department will have on hand an adequate number of flashlights and replacement batteries.
- In the event of a severe weather emergency, emergency equipment is available for facility hardening, this includes:
 - Duct tape
 - Sandbags
 - Blankets, linens, cots
 - Flashlights
 - Portable radios
 - Emergency generator
 - Pumps
 - Water and food supplies

OVERVIEW: This plan is intended to help protect patients, staff, visitors, and the facility during a severe weather event. It is important for the ward clerk at the hospital and receptionist at the clinic to listen to a weather radio for severe weather updates and to monitor the NOAA weather website when Glasgow is forecasted to be affected by a severe weather event. Severe weather related events can pose large threats to hospital and clinic operations, including the ability to maintain essential functions and medical care. The extent of the emergency should always be assessed by the charge nurse / administration and activation procedures should be followed. FMDH shelter-in-place protocols have been written and are readily available to employees. FMDH personnel have been informed of designated emergency routes and hospital shelter-in locations. FMDH employees are trained with the intention of improving safe sheltering procedures of the facility and averting panic during an actual emergency.

ACTIVATION

Authority to Activate: Not all weather emergencies require hospital sheltering in. When it becomes apparent the weather poses a threat to patients, staff, and visitors and may result in injury or loss of life, the charge nurse / administrator is responsible for assessing the severe weather threat and the need to order shelter-in-place of the facility. FMDH has identified administrator-on-call as the authority responsible for ordering a shelter-in-place.

SEVERE WEATHER “WATCH”

- A severe weather "watch" is forecast by the National Weather Service when weather conditions are such that severe weather could be produced.
 - When the ward clerk hears a forecast by the National Weather Service, the operator will contact the charge nurse, administrator-on-call and maintenance that a severe weather watch (i.e.: Tornado Watch, Thunderstorm Watch, Flood Watch, etc.) is in effect. The charge nurse will inform the staff that a "watch" has been issued and they should prepare for the possibility of severe weather occurring.

SEVERE WEATHER “WARNING”

- A severe weather "warning" is given upon the visual or radar sighting of a tornado

or funnel cloud threatening Glasgow, or if the National Weather Service feels that conditions are such that one is imminent, or winds are expected to reach 60 mph or greater.

- ALERT: Upon notification from Valley County 9-1-1, EMS, or hearing the National Weather Service warning on the radio, shelter-in-place procedures should be followed.
 - The Make overhead page notification of FACILITY ALERT + (WEATHER EVENT) + “Shelter-in-place, this is not a drill.”
 - The most likely scenario would be a tornado warning close to FMDH. Should this occur the following procedures are recommended:
 - If outside, seek shelter in the facility. Move to interior hallways.
 - Move to the lowest floor in the facility, the basement below the clinic is a good option if available.
 - Patients should be moved out of patient rooms with windows into hallways. Close all fire doors and patient room doors.
 - The best choice on first floor level would be an interior room with no windows, or a small room like a closet, or bathroom.
 - If windows are in the room, close and lock windows and doors, pull down blinds.
 - Center yourself under large furniture, or other objects, and protect yourself from flying glass, ceiling tiles, or debris.
 - Remain close to the floor as possible, stay out of corners and away from outside walls.
 - Turn off lights if possible.
 - If anyone is seriously injured, call 9-1-1 and request assistance for evacuation from damaged area.
 - All Clear Procedure – Severe Storm
 - Remain where you are at until "all clear" is given.
 - If facility has received a direct hit and substantial damage has occurred, stay where you are unless you are in immediate danger.
 - Let rescue come to you.
 - Call 9-1-1 to let them know where you are located.
 - Do Not touch any fallen or low-hanging wires of any kind under any circumstances.
 - Stay away from water puddles with wires in/near them.
 - Do not touch trees or other objects in contact with power lines.
 - Be aware for downed lines, broken gas or water mains, other hazards that have risk of fire, electrocution, or an explosion.
 - Be aware of hazards from exposed nails, screws, sharp debris and broken glass.
 - Do not use electrical powered devices that have been wet.
- RESPONSE: The charge nurse will appoint staff, upon notification of a “warning,” to assist patients and visitors to designated shelters/ hallways and take cover themselves.

COMMUNICATION

FMDH's communication during a severe-weather incident is vital. FMDH Incident Command should be activated as appropriate. Emergency management, law enforcement, surrounding hospitals, and other emergency response agencies should be notified by hospital command if severe weather poses an extreme threat to hospital facility and hospital operations. Continued contact with Valley County Emergency Operations Center is essential for requesting of resources and assistance as needed. Incident Command will continue to assess the current weather threat and/or facility damage.

PROCEDURES:

General Operations

- FMDH's Emergency Operations Plan should be activated accordingly.
- Maintenance will check fuel levels and test start emergency generator and give status report to Incident Command.
- The Administrator-on-call will activate HICS and incident command.
- FMDH ward clerk and clinic receptionist should monitor pre-event weather forecasts and projections.
- FMDH Incident Command Staff will access severe weather events and will order shelter-in place or evacuation procedures, as appropriate.
- FMDH will initiate facility hardening. (see below for steps)
- FMDH will cancel elective surgeries and procedures and other non-essential hospital services as seen necessary. Glasgow Clinic will cancel appointments.
- Incident Command Staff will order activation of patient surge plans, if needed.
- FMDH will coordinate with local law enforcement and City of Glasgow Street Department to secure facility areas as needed.

FMDH staff will perform the following duties during a severe weather sheltering.

- During a National Weather Service Warning, all elevators will be recalled to the first floor and locked open. All visitors and hospital personnel will use the stairs.
- Staff should listen for overhead announcements alerting staff for severe weather updates. NOAA Weather Radios should be checked to be on and capable of receiving alerts.
- Upon orders by overhead announcement, staff is responsible for rapid initiation of shelter-in place protocol. Nurses and designated staff should monitor overhead pages for any changes in orders.
 - Staff should act immediately and orderly to follow the instructions in both patient units and non-patient areas.
- Incident Command Staff will identify and address issues associated with ongoing shelter in place within the facility.

Initiate severe storm facility hardening actions:

- Protect windows, close blinds or curtains, move patients, staff, visitors away from all glass.
- Move patients/ beds to hallways away from windows as far as possible.

- Secure outside loose items.
- Inspect and repair drains, gutters and flashings.
- Park vehicles in best locations to maximize protection.
- Secure movable objects that may become damaged or present hazards by pushing them against an inner wall.
- Obtain supplemental supplies of essential items.
- Check emergency lighting equipment. Make sure your area has an adequate supply of functioning flashlights and replacement batteries for emergency use.
- Protect high risk areas i.e., patient floor, nurse's station, pharmacy.
- Relocate at-risk items to safe areas.
- Ensure emergency power is available and emergency outlets are being used.
- Monitor weather websites:
 - <http://preview.weather.gov/edd/>
 - <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/ridge2/>
 - <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/wrh/whv/?wfo=ggw>
- Prepare for telephone / cell phone outages.
- Plan to deactivate all non-critical, non-essential and sensitive electrical equipment.
- Be prepared to evacuate any area of the hospital as necessary. Review evacuation plan.
- Close all doors and windows to patient rooms.
- Have staff remain in facility.
- During periods of heavy rain, heavy snow or blizzard, EMS will coordinate all emergency responses with law enforcement, county, state and private resources.

Initiate severe storm emergency actions:

Nursing Guidelines: Each nurse is responsible for his/her own patients. The following guidelines should be observed:

- Encourage all employees, patients, visitors to stay in the facility if weather outside is severe.
- If time allows, transfer patients to designated shelter-in locations.
- If time does not allow, all persons should move to interior corridors or a room away from windows.
- Follow shelter-in procedures and movement of occupants in the department to shelter-in locations, if necessary.
- Ambulatory patients should be directed to designated shelters with a chair, pillow, and blanket.
- Patients en route from one area to another should be taken to the nearest designated shelter until the all clear is given.
- If time allows, all visitors should be directed to go with patients. If time does not allow, hospital personnel should direct visitors to the closest designated shelter.
- If storm is inevitable and time does not allow for shelter-in, follow the procedure below.

Initiate severe storm emergency actions if severe storm appears inevitable:

Nursing Guidelines: Each nurse is responsible for his/her own patients. The following guidelines should be observed:

- Stay alert for the ward clerk to sound an emergency severe weather warning and any shelter-in- place alerts over the intercom system.
- Patients who should not be moved may be left in the room with extra blankets and pillows over them for protection.
- Protect windows by drawing all shades and closing all drapes as protection against shattering glass.
- Lower all patient beds to the lowest position, and move the bed away from the windows as much as possible.
- Close all doors. Mark rooms that have been searched/evacuated.
- Get as many ambulatory patients as possible into the hallways.
- Do not use the elevator.
- Ongoing weather conditions may hamper operations.
- Flooding may be a problem.
- Crowd control/ traffic/ medical surge.
- IT – server recovery.
- Establish staging areas.
- Pharmacy – recovery / tetanus boosters / discharged prescription needs.
- Emotional and physical trauma – displaced families.
- Safety and security.

BLIZZARD

Operations:

- In addition to facility hardening:
 - Add extra blankets and linens to patients for warmth.
 - Clear snow from all entries, pathways, and other areas, especially ER.
 - Monitor roof areas and prepare facility for winter storm.
 - Cancel elective surgeries and procedures and other non-essential hospital services as seen necessary.
 - FMDH Public Information Officer (PIO) is responsible for providing communication regarding hospital status to Valley County EOC, patient families and community, utilizing television, radio, and telephone.
 - Alternate modes of patient and employee transportation may be utilized if needed. Arrangements may be made to transport employees to and from the facility through EMS and Valley County Search and Rescue.
 - Employees may be required to park in alternate locations to facilitate snow removal.
 - If the effects of the severe weather will interrupt operations for more than one 12 hour shift, Incident Command will be implemented to the extent necessary to deal with the circumstances of the storm.

Staff Resources:

- Non-clinical staff should report to staging area for new assignment.
- Staff should report to hospital at time of shift, if unable to report notification to the charge nurse should be made 2 hours prior to the start of the shift so that special transportation arrangements can be made or alternate scheduling can be done.
- Department directors are expected to have an emergency staffing plan to assure their ability to provide essential department/assignment services during these conditions.
- Incident Command will manage staff assignments, make decisions regarding continuation of operations, and length of implementation plan.
- Hospital will use modified shifts and modified contingency staff assignments, including reassigning non-clinical staff to help provide extra staff support with facility hardening and patient care areas.

TORNADO**Operations:**

- Patient Areas-
 - Nurses are responsible for tracking and transporting of his/her own patients.
 - If time allows, transfer patients to designated tornado shelter location.
 - Ambulatory patients should be directed to designated shelters with a chair, pillow, and blanket to take cover.
 - Non-ambulatory patients should be transported to designated tornado shelter using appropriate equipment and covered with pillows and blankets for protection.
 - Staff should perform above duties and take shelter.
 - If time does not allow, follow general emergency procedure:
 - Patients who should not be moved may be left in the room with extra blankets and pillows over them for protection.
 - Protect windows by drawing all shades and closing all drapes as protection against shattering glass.
 - Lower all patient beds to the lowest position, and move the bed away from the windows as much as possible.
 - Close all doors.
 - Get as many ambulatory patients as possible into the hallways.
 - Staff should protect themselves and take cover.
- Non-Patient Areas
 - Staff should direct any visitors to the designated shelter and if time allows, non-clinical staff should report to staging area for assignment.
 - If time does not allow, staff should quickly direct any visitors to the designated shelter or hallway and take proper cover using arms, blankets, and pillows.

Staff Resources:

- If under a tornado warning, all individuals in county should take cover. Staff should not report to hospital at time of shift, but find shelter immediately. Staff should later report to hospital after the national weather service has issued the “All Clear.”

ALL CLEAR: The Incident Commander will verify with the Valley County Dispatch 9-1-1 Center and/or Glasgow Weather Service, that the all clear signals can be announced. The ward clerk will inform all departments by overhead page of the all clear. After the all clear is given, elevators will return to normal operation and individuals can return to regular areas. Check for storm damage and report to Incident Command.

RECOVERY AND RESPONSE

FMDH has designated responsibility for recovery and response issues as seen necessary for the facility after a severe weather incident. This may include:

- FMDH will conduct appropriate recovery operations in conjunction with health and facility safety issues related to incident. FMDH will assess damage and use available resources, utilize Memorandums of Understanding (MOU), or request resources through the Local EOC to gradually return the hospital to normal operations.
 - A Damage Assessment Team will evaluate both a structural assessment and general plant safety inspection. If in the judgment of the Incident Command that the facility is not safe, processes for facility evacuation will begin.
- The charge nurse will identify and initiate continuation of patient care services.
- Support Services will coordinate critical infrastructure restoration.
 - Electrical
 - Water
 - Heating
 - Cooling systems
 - HVAC
 - Vacuum and medical gas system
- Incident Command will coordinate demobilization.
- Support Services will assess system recovery.
- Financial chief will document and track response expenses.
- Incident Command will identify criteria and procedures to return to normal operations.
- The Safety Officer will perform equipment safety checks.
- Incident Command will perform staff debriefing.
- Incident Command will prioritize service restoration activities.
- The Safety Officer and Support Services are responsible for evaluating infrastructure operation needs, initiate repair plan, and contract for needed repair assistance.
- The Safety Officer and damage assessment team will perform damage assessment (interior and exterior) and plan for clean up and repair.
- The Safety Officer will monitor environmental issues (bio waste disposal) and water safety.

REVIEW PROCESS:

- The review process is scheduled for every three years or as needed.