**Severe Weather Response Plan**

**Montana Specific Severe Weather Resources and Information**

**1. Montana State Emergency Preparedness Resources and Links**

* [Montana | Drought.gov](https://www.drought.gov/states/montana): The U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) is updated each Thursday to show the location and intensity of drought across the country. This map shows drought conditions across Montana using a five-category system, from Abnormally Dry (D0) conditions to Exceptional Drought (D4). The USDM is a joint effort of the National Drought Mitigation Center, USDA, and NOAA.
* [Preparedness (mt.gov)](https://des.mt.gov/Preparedness/): Planning is the first of the five steps in the preparedness cycle and is a critical component in community readiness. The MT Disaster & Emergency Services Planning Program works with federal, state, and local partners to provide information on emergency, strategic and operational planning so that updated plans and procedures are in place to help guide preparedness, response, and recovery activities.
* [Thunderstorms & Lightning | Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov/thunderstorms-lightning): Lightning is a leading cause of injury and death from weather-related hazards. Although most lightning victims survive, people struck by lightning often report a variety of long-term, debilitating symptoms. Know your area’s risk for thunderstorms and prepare.
* [Montana Severe Weather Awareness](https://www.weather.gov/byz/SevereWxAware): This information offers information on different types of severe weather that the State of Montana has and also to provide safety information related to each type.

**2. Montana Regional Emergency Preparedness Resources and Links**

* [Extreme Weather Map | Fact Sheet | Environment Montana](https://environmentmontana.org/page/mte/extreme-weather-map-fact-sheet): Every year, weather-related disasters injure or kill hundreds of Americans and cause billions of dollars in damage. [1] Many of the risks posed by extreme weather will likely increase in a warming world. Scientists have already noted increases in extreme precipitation and heat waves as global warming raises temperatures and exacerbates weather extremes.
* [The Montana Disaster Center news, weather, emergency, directory to online information](https://disastercenter.com/montana/montana.htm): Interactive weather map via the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Find out the weather in any specific region in Montana at any time. Up to date and Historic weather maps can be found here.

**3. Montana Local Emergency Preparedness Resources and Links: please add in local information specific to the county or counties where your Health Center (s) are located.-**

* [Winter Weather Preparedness - Emergency Management | Montana State University](https://www.montana.edu/emergency/emergency_actions/winter-weather.html): Learn how to prepare for Site for Severe Winter Weather. Learn about what to do before and after a severe storm.
* [Spring and Summer Severe Weather Preparedness - Emergency Management | Montana State University](https://www.montana.edu/emergency/emergency_actions/summer-weather.html): Learn how to prepare for Site for Severe Winter Weather. Learn about what to do before and after a severe storm.
* [Montana Disaster & Emergency Survival Guide (mt.gov)](https://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/brochures/winter_maint/winter_survival.pdf): Montana’s weather is among the most severe in the nation. Additionally, our weather is among the most diverse, presenting extreme highs and lows. Add to that the high risk for flooding, wildland fires, earthquakes, and a variety of other hazards, and you could have a survivor challenge. See the official State of Montana Disaster and Emergency Survival Guide for severe weather.

<insert any local resources specific to your health center in this section. Delete these instructions when completed.<

<Incorporate any of your organization’s existing severe weather response plan information throughout this template.>

<FIND and REPLACE WORDS: Look for the words in GREY. Insert LOGO in the upper right corner of the header.

1. <insert Organization’s name> or <insert organization’s name> = Your Organization’s Name
2. Patient, patients, patient = Use the most appropriate words that describes the individuals that your organization services (i.e. patient, resident, participant, client, etc.)

<Delete these instructions in RED.>

**Background**

This Severe Weather Response Plan provides mitigation, preparedness, response, and initial recovery strategies for severe weather including ice storms, blizzards, rain, flooding, and extreme heat and cold. Severe weather can have a significant effect on the program sites of <insert Organization’s name>. This plan has been designed to work in conjunction with the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and related policies and procedures including, **Safe Evacuation and Shelter-in-Place located in Section 2.**  It contains specific procedures that are necessary when a severe weather watch has been declared by the National Weather Service.

Severe weather can cause power outages that last for days, make roads and walkways very dangerous, and can affect community services. Severe weather is often accompanied by extreme high and low temperatures.

<Insert the impact of this hazard on your Organization > <Insert information regarding the significance of season weather, geographic area, human population, etc., that may be associated with this hazard in your local area. Delete these instructions in RED>.

**Definitions**

* **Ice Storm Warning:** Issued for a significant and possibly damaging accumulation of ice of around 1/4 inch or more. This amount of ice accumulation will make travel dangerous or impossible and likely lead to snapped power lines and falling tree branches.
* **Blizzard Warning:** Notification issued the National Weather Service indicating sustained winds or frequent gusts to 35 miles per hour or greater and considerable falling or blowing snow (reducing visibility to less than a quarter mile) are expected to prevail for a period of three hours or longer.
* **Freezing Rain Advisory**: Issued when light ice accumulation (freezing rain and/or freezing drizzle) is expected but will not reach warning criteria (see Ice Storm). Conditions could cause driving or walking problems, but damage is not expected.
* **Thunderstorm Warning:** Issued when there is a serious threat to life and property to those in the path of the storm.
* **Flood Warning:** Issued when flooding is imminent or is occurring.
* **Storm Surge:** A dome of water pushed on shore with the storm that may cause flooding up to 20 feet above normal sea level along major stretches of coastline.
* **Excessive Heat Warning:** Issued within 12 hours of the onset of extremely dangerous heat conditions. The general rule of thumb for this Warning is when the maximum heat index temperature is expected to be 105° or higher for at least 2 days and nighttime air temperatures will not drop below 75°. If you do not take precautions immediately when conditions are extreme, you may become seriously ill or even die.
* **Winter Storm Warning:** Notification by the National Weather Service indicating that a winter storm is occurring or is imminent in 30 to 60 minutes.
* **Program Site:** The first notification issued by the National Weather Service that a winter storm is a definite threat to a geographic region. This is typically issued between 12 to 36 hours prior to storm begins.

**Policy**

It is the policy of <insert Organization’s name> to protect our patients, staff, and others in our program site from harm during emergency events. To accomplish this, we have developed procedures for specific hazards which build on the cross-cutting strategies in our continuity of operations plan. The priority of <insert Organization’s name> is to minimize the stress our patients and staff could experience from extreme winter weather events. To mitigate this risk, we rigorously maintain our systems of heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and generator. In the event of a disruption to these systems during extreme weather, we will initiate the appropriate actions discussed in this Plan.

**Objectives**

* Provide for patient care and management
* Provide for the safety of patients, staff, families, and visitors
* Provide for continuing operational status of the program site or safe evacuation from the program site

**Procedures**

1. **General Guidelines**
   * Staff shall receive training on this Plan
   * Staff are required to follow this Severe Weather Response Plan and any instructions given by law enforcement, first responders, or management staff
   * Staff are required to follow any instructions given through primary or backup communications systems
   * Staff are required to know the program site exit routes and assembly points.
2. **Preparedness**

* **Year Round**
* Staff shall review this Plan, EOP, and other supporting policies and procedures, including safe evacuation and shelter-in-place.
* Staff shall confirm accurate and current telephone numbers for support vendors/responders such as medical supplies, food and water for sheltering, snow removal contractors, and others as needed.
* Facilities Management should:
  + Secure shutters, etc. to secure windows from storm damage.
  + Arrange for adequate fuel supplies for vehicles, generators, etc.
  + Check grounds and remove dead limbs.
  + Properly support weakly rooted trees.
  + Clean up loose debris.
  + Begin moving all loose equipment and materials.
  + Check roofs for loose debris.
  + Make sure all storm & floor drains are clear
* **When Severe Weather is Predicted**
* Begin frequent monitoring of weather-related media sources including the National Weather Service, NOAA, FEMA, or state or local emergency management agency. Review current conditions and discusses general plans and readiness and recommended actions to management.
* Management or the Liaison Officer shall maintain communications with the local Emergency Operations Center (EOC).
* Executive Director and/or Incident Commander (or designee) shall begin implementation of safe evacuation or shelter-in-place procedures as needed depending on conditions and warnings.
* **Alteration of Services** may be necessary in advance of the storm.

<Indicate how/when services/times may be altered, including criteria for making this decision>

1. **Response**

* **General**
  + Remain calm.
  + Reassure patients.
  + Follow orders from the Incident Commander.
  + Alert Management staff as necessary to any infrastructural damage, including failing or near failing doors, windows, blinds, shutters, etc.
  + During any form of electrical failure, use the stairs DO NOT use elevators.
  + If directed, follow safe evacuation procedures as determined necessary by Incident Commander located at **Section 2: Policy and Procedures #1: Safe Evacuation**.
  + If directed, follow Shelter-in-Place procedures as determined necessary by Incident Commander per located at **Section 2: Policy and Procedures #1: Shelter-in-Place**.
* **Management Staff/Incident Management Team During Severe Weather**
* Consider activating ICS.
* Incident Management Team will report to the program site EOC.
* Liaison Officer shall maintain communications with the local EOC.
* All regular staff shall report to the labor pool.
* Continue monitoring of weather-related media sources including the National Weather Service, NOAA, FEMA, or state or local emergency management agency.
* Activate the Safe Evacuation or Shelter-in-Place Policy and Procedures.
* If power failure is possible or predicted and standby generators are not available, staff will need to make accommodations to move refrigerated or frozen medications to a backup cooling source.
* In the event of power failure during the height of the severe weather, there will be no elevator service. Do not attempt to travel between floors using elevators.

1. **Recovery**

* Following severe weather, essential staff in Facilities Management and Safety will:
  + Assess and advise the Incident Management Team which buildings and facilities can be used safely.
  + Check roof drains to ensure that none are clogged once wind conditions permit.
  + Inspect roofs, doors, and exteriors of buildings for egress, security, and loose material.
* **Return to Normal Operations** may not happen, or be possible, immediately.

<Indicate how/when services/times may be resumed, including criteria for making this decision>

**Incident Management Team Roles and Responsibilities**

**Incident Commander**

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| **Checkmark** | **Immediate Actions (0-2 hrs)** |
|  | Activate the Emergency Operations Plan, Severe Weather Plan, and health center Incident Management Team (IMT) |
|  | Activate the health center Emergency Operations Center |
|  | Notify health center Chief Executive Officer, Board of Directors, and other appropriate internal and external officials of situation status |
|  | Activate the Evacuation, Shelter-in-Place, and Health center Abandonment Plan, as needed |
|  | Establish operational periods, objectives, and regular briefing schedule. Consider the use of Incident Action Plan Quick Start for initial documentation of the incident |
|  | Determine timeline and criteria for discontinuation of nonessential services and procedures |
|  | **Intermediate Response (2-12 hrs)** |
|  | Evaluate the health center’s capability to provide safe patient care and need for evacuation |
|  | **Demobilization/Recovery (Greater than 24 hrs)** |
|  | Determine health center status and declare termination of the incident |
|  | Approve the Demobilization Plan |

**Public Information Officer (PIO)**

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| **Checkmark** | **Immediate Actions (0-2 hrs)** |
|  | Inform patients, staff, and families of situation status and provide regular updates |
|  | Monitor media outlets for updates on the incident and possible impacts on the health center. Communicate information via regular briefings to IMT and the Incident Commander |
|  | **Intermediate Response (2-12 hrs)** |
|  | Conduct briefings to patients, staff, and persons seeking shelter as well as the media to provide updates on storm and health center status |
|  | Coordinate risk communication messages with the Joint Information Center, if able |
|  | Address social media issues as warranted; use social media for messaging as situation dictates |
|  | **Demobilization/Recovery (Greater than 24 hrs)** |
|  | Conduct a final media briefing and assist with updating patients, staff, families, and persons seeking shelter of termination of incident |

**Liaison Officer**

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| **Checkmark** | **Immediate Actions (0-2 hrs)** |
|  | Coordinate with community partners in accordance with local policies and procedures (e.g., consider local Emergency Operations Center, other area facilities, local emergency medical services, etc.) to provide incident details, community status, estimates of casualties, and establish process for requesting supplies, equipment, or personnel not available in the health center |
|  | Obtain the most current and projected weather information from local and national sources |
|  | Communicate with other facilities to determine situation status, and their ability to accept patients if transferred or if a health center evacuation is ordered |
|  | **Intermediate Response (2-12 hrs)** |
|  | Maintain contact with the local Emergency Operations Center, other area facilities, local emergency medical services, and regional medical health coordinator to relay status and critical needs and to receive storm and community updates |
|  | **Demobilization/Recovery (Greater than 24 hrs)** |
|  | Communicate the final health center status and termination of the incident to the local Emergency Operations Center, area facilities, local emergency medical services, and officials |
|  | Assist with the repatriation of transferred patients |
|  | Assist with updating key stakeholders and others of the termination of the incident |

**Safety Officer**

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| **Checkmark** | **Immediate Actions (0-2 hrs)** |
|  | Complete HICS 215A to assign, direct, and ensure safety actions are adhered to and completed |
|  | Advise the Operations Section regarding health center hardening and protective measures |
|  | Recommend safe areas for immediate shelter-in-place to protect life |
|  | Monitor for the safe shelter-in-place of patients, staff, and visitors |
|  | Evaluate safety issues related to current patient care services, health center census, and operational considerations for next 24 hours |
|  | **Intermediate Response (2-12 hrs)** |
|  | Continue to monitor weather reports and conditions |
|  | Communicate potentially unsafe conditions to the Incident Commander for evaluation for continuation of care or closure |
|  | Maintain the safety of patients, staff, families, and individuals seeking shelter to the best possible extent |
|  | Update the HICS 215A as required |
|  | **Demobilization/Recovery (Greater than 24 hrs)** |
|  | Monitor and maintain a safe environment during the return to normal operations |
|  | Ensure applicable regulatory agencies are notified of alterations in life safety, safe workplace issues, or environment of care issues |

**Operations Section Chief**

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| **Checkmark** | **Immediate Actions (0-2 hrs)** |
|  | Determine if personnel and resources are available to successfully complete the Incident Action Plan. If not, contact Logistics for additional personnel or resources |
|  | Assess patients for risk and prioritize care and resources, as appropriate |
|  | At the storm’s onset, evacuate any patients, staff, and visitors from impacted areas to safety |
|  | Identify evacuation priorities and transfer requirements |
|  | Assess the impact of the storm on continued outpatient services; determine the need for cancellations or rescheduling |
|  | Assess the impact of the storm on home care services and the need to cancel visits, the movement of patients to inpatient facilities, and subsequent impact on health status |
|  | Review evacuation policy and procedures and determine whether identified evacuation sites are feasible in consideration of storm, transportation routes, and resources for movement |
|  | Implement emergency plans and procedures as needed (heating, ventilation, air conditioning, utilities, and communications, etc.) |
|  | Oversee the immediate stabilization of the health center infrastructure and initiate protective measures |
|  | Maintain utilities and communications with service providers, activating alternate systems as needed |
|  | Implement emergency support procedures to sustain critical services (i.e., power, water, medical gases, and communications) |
|  | Secure the health center and implement restricted access procedures |
|  | Initiate Business Continuity Plans and procedures |
|  | **Intermediate Response (2-12 hrs)** |
|  | Continue or implement evacuation or shelter-in-place, as needed |
|  | Ensure that all documentation, including damage assessments, repair costs, and tracking materials are submitted to the Planning Section |
|  | If partial (lateral or vertical) evacuation is required:   * Prepare and ensure transfer of patient records, medications, and valuables to transfer location * Provide patient information as appropriate * If evacuation is from secondary fire or explosion, evacuation must be to a fire compartment at least two compartments away (horizontally or vertically) from the fire or explosion * Reassign personnel to ensure adequate staffing in area receiving patients   If complete evacuation is required:   * Prioritize areas for evacuation based on Safety Officer's evaluation of the threat to life * Prepare and ensure transfer of patient records, medications, and valuables to holding or assembly area * Confirm transfer and timeline with receiving health center, providing patient information as appropriate * Establish safe holding or assembly area to place patients, patient belongings, and staff until transferred   Reassign staff to accompany patients to alternate locations to ensure adequate staffing for patient care |
|  | Maintain patient care services, including those provided in evacuation sites |
|  | Monitor patients and visitors for adverse effects on health and for psychological stress |
|  | Conduct regular health center and infrastructure evaluations and assessments and respond immediately to damage or problems |
|  | Continue health center security and maintain restricted access; determine the need for expansion |
|  | Assist with the notification of patients’ families regarding the situation and inform them of the likelihood of evacuation, if required |
|  | Determine the need to provide shelter and support for families and dependents of patients |
|  | **Demobilization/Recovery (Greater than 24 hrs)** |
|  | Give the “all clear” to reschedule canceled surgeries, procedures, elective admissions, and outpatient appointments |
|  | Repatriate transferred patients, if applicable |
|  | Provide behavioral health support and information about community services to patients and families, as needed |
|  | Monitor that fire doors and alarms are in working order |
|  | Conduct or continue damage assessment surveys |
|  | Ensure completion of health center repairs and coordinate with Planning and Finance/Administration Sections |
|  | Complete the health center damage report, progress of repairs, and estimated timelines for restoration of the health center to pre-incident condition |
|  | Monitor that entry and exit points are open and functioning |
|  | If record keeping included use of paper-based records, ensure all clinical information is entered into electronic medical records |
|  | Notify families of repatriated patients or patients permanently transferred to other facilities |

**Planning Section Chief**

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| **Checkmark** | **Immediate Actions (0-2 hrs)** |
|  | Establish operational periods, incident objectives, and the Incident Action Plan in collaboration with IMT and Incident Commander |
|  | Gather internal situation status including supply and equipment status, and current staff and visitor census |
|  | Activate HICS 254 for patients and injured visitors that are relocated to another health center during and after the storm |
|  | Gather internal situation status including patient census and bed status |
|  | Identify potential discharges, in coordination with Operations Section |
|  | Assess the community impact of the storm to determine direct and indirect effects on staff, transportation, power, etc. |
|  | **Intermediate Response (2-12 hrs)** |
|  | Continue operational periods, incident objectives, and revise the Incident Action Plan in collaboration with the Incident Commander. Ensure that updated information and intelligence is incorporated into the Incident Action Plan |
|  | Continue to monitor situation status and update status boards |
|  | Continue staff and equipment tracking |
|  | Collect and collate completed documentation of actions, decisions, and activities |
|  | Prepare for demobilization and system recovery |
|  | **Extended Response (Greater than 12 hrs)** |
|  | Update and revise the Incident Action Plan in collaboration with IMT and Incident Commander |
|  | Ensure that updated information and intelligence is incorporated into Incident Action Plan. Ensure the Demobilization Plan is being readied |
|  | Update status boards and other communication devices with latest health center and community status |
|  | **Demobilization/Recovery (Greater than 24 hrs)** |
|  | Finalize and distribute the Demobilization Plan |
|  | Implement the Demobilization Plan |
|  | Ensure that all impacted clinical and support operations are relayed to appropriate sections for resolution |
|  | Conduct debriefings and After-Action Review with:   * IMT * Administrative personnel * All staff * All volunteers |
|  | Write an After-Action Report and Corrective Action and Improvement Plan for submission to the Incident Commander, describing:   * Summary of the incident * Summary of actions taken * Actions that went well * Actions that could be improved * Recommendations for future response actions |
|  | Collect, collate, file, and secure completed documentation of actions, decisions, and activities |
|  | Prepare a summary of the status and location of all incident patients, staff, and equipment. After approval by the Incident Commander, distribute it to appropriate external agencies |
|  | Ensure that issues impacting clinical and support operations are relayed to appropriate sections for resolution |

**Logistics Section Chief**

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| **Checkmark** | **Immediate Actions (0-2 hrs)** |
|  | Implement emergency support procedures to sustain communications and information technology |
|  | Obtain and distribute food and water to sustain operations |
|  | Obtain and distribute supplies, equipment, medications to sustain operations |
|  | **Intermediate Response (2-12 hrs)** |
|  | Provide for continuing communication systems and information technology functionality |
|  | Continue to obtain and distribute food and water to sustain operations. Route requests for additional resources not available in the health center through the Liaison Officer to outside agencies |
|  | Continue to obtain needed supplies, equipment, and medications. Route requests for additional resources not available in the health center through the Liaison Officer to outside agencies |
|  | Obtain supplemental staffing, as needed, and continue to provide staff for patient care and evacuation |
|  | Monitor staff for adverse effects on health and for psychological stress; provide behavioral health support services for staff |
|  | Consider providing family members and dependents a secure haven during the severe weather event |
|  | Monitor, report, follow up on, and document staff or patient injuries |
|  | Provide transportation services for internal operations and patient evacuation |
|  | **Demobilization/Recovery (Greater than 24 hrs)** |
|  | Inventory all health center Emergency Operations Center and health center supplies and replenish as necessary, appropriate, and available |
|  | Release temporary staff and other personnel to normal positions |
|  | Monitor and assist with restoration of communications and Information Technology Services |
|  | Restock supplies, equipment, medications, food and water to pre-incident inventories |
|  | Complete documentation and follow up of personnel injury or line-of-duty death as appropriate |

**Finance/Admin Section Chief**

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| **Checkmark** | **Immediate Actions (0-2 hrs)** |
|  | Implement established pay codes for personnel to track hours associated with storm |
|  | **Intermediate Response (2-12 hrs)** |
|  | Continue to track hours associated with the emergency response |
|  | Facilitate procurement of supplies, etc., in cooperation with Logistics Section |
|  | Begin to collect, when safe, documentation of structural and infrastructure damage and initiate reimbursement and claims procedures |
|  | Track and monitor all expenditures, response, storm damage, and repair costs |
|  | Track estimates of lost revenue due to health center storm damage and response |
|  | **Demobilization/Recovery (Greater than 24 hrs)** |
|  | Review the summary of final response and recovery costs, expenditures and estimated lost revenues; submit to the Planning Section Chief for inclusion in the After-Action Report |
|  | Contact insurance carriers to initiate reimbursement and claims procedures |
|  | Coordinate with Risk Management for additional insurance and documentation needs, including images of damages |
|  | Compile a final summary of response and recovery costs, expenditures, and estimated lost revenues |