

New York State Department of Health

Advisory - Tropical Storm Elsa Guidance

July 8, 2021

For Hospital, Nursing Home, Adult Care Facility, Home Care, Hospice, Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities (ICF/IDDs) and Diagnostic and Treatment Center (D&TC) providers located in the five (5) boroughs of New York City (NYC) and Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island (LI).

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) is closely monitoring updates to the forecasted path of Tropical Storm Elsa. Based on the current, forecasted track of the storm, the National Weather Service (NWS) does not expect a serious impact on coastal areas of NYS. At this time there is no expectation that large scale evacuation will be needed. This expectation is subject to change should the path of the storm should take a more westerly direction over the next 24 hours.

As Elsa is still expected to remain a tropical storm as it passes to the southeast of the NYC/Long Island area, some potential impacts of the storm may include:

- heavy rain, beginning overnight Thursday (tonight) of 1-3" with the 3" potential on Long Island, between 2 am to 12 pm tomorrow
- sustained winds in NYC of 20-30 mph with gusts up to 40 mph and sustained winds on LI of 35 – 40 mph with gusts up to 50 mph for a period of 4-6 hours tonight into Friday morning
- low potential for tornadic spin-offs
- power outages/downed trees
- rip currents, minor flash flooding of 2-3", potentially high surf of 6-9 feet
- heat index will be in the lower 90s

Given the remaining measure of uncertainty about the path of the storm, the NYSDOH is providing the following pre-storm guidance regarding preparations to be taken by facilities in the potential impact area.

We thank you in advance for your attention to these important preparations.

General Guidance (NOTE: not all activities apply to all types of providers):

1. Prepare your facility/operations, and staff:

- a. Given some potential for power outages, it is essential to review plans for the loss of power; test and confirm operations of emergency generator; confirm or acquire adequate generator fuel supply is onsite for at least 96 hours
- b. Review communications plan:

- i. Test primary and back-up communication's systems use at your facility, including radios; assure correct contacts for trained radio operators you may utilize
- ii. **Ensure that you have plan in place to notify the appropriate NYSDOH regional office team consistent with regulatory requirements.**
- iii. Updates are made for contact information for the roles of emergency coordinators and leadership at the facility are updated in the Health Commerce System (HCS) as detailed below.
- iv. Ensure contact information is updated and available (backed up) for all essential community level partners if the facility is in need of services or supplies., including your local Office of Emergency Management as well as fire, police, utilities, suppliers, other healthcare partners; Homecare agencies must assure that a paper backup copy of these contacts is available.
- v. Providers should notify their NYSDOH regional office if they activate their Emergency Preparedness plans
- c. Ensure food service, water, pharmacy, medical gases, other medical and environmental service supplies are immediately available to the facility to last for at least 96 hours
- d. Update employee rosters and ensure backup of this roster; *homecare agencies must assure that they have a paper copy of employee roster*
 - i. Consider alternate staffing arrangements; shifts and management of staffing shortages due to transportation impacts; and
 - ii. Ensure preparations for staff that must be boarded on site if roadways are not passable and staff cannot get to or from their work location
- e. Review and update patient/resident census; homecare agencies must ensure they have a paper roster of patients and residents
- f. Assure there are staff available on all shifts to use key NYSDOH Health Commerce System (HCS) Applications as detailed below, for planning, data submission and receipt of alerts and advisories.

2. Should evacuation of your facility become necessary for any reason:

- a. Facilities should be sure to refer to and confirm previously developed sending and receiving evacuation arrangements.
- b. If there is a need for evacuation, the facility should contact their NYSDOH regional office for needed assistance
- c. Facilities should review the facility evacuation and emergency response plans and protocols with their staff, including:
 - i. Review of procedures for discharge and other methods to reduce facility census if needed
 - ii. Review and update patient/resident census and status by Transportation Asset Level (TALs) Categories and NYSDOH Health Evacuation Center

(HEC) bed categories (defined below)* and related transportation asset needs

d. eFINDS:

- i. If there is a need for evacuation, the name of the eFINDS operation to be used by hospitals, nursing homes and adult care facilities when entering their evacuating patient/resident information into eFINDS is:
“2021-07-08 TROPICAL STORM ELSA - NYC AND LONG ISLAND”
- ii. Hospitals, nursing homes/ICFs and adult care facilities should ensure they have access to their eFINDS supplies in case of an evacuation, i.e., barcode scanner, wrist bands, and paper tracking logs are stored and that you will have staff available on all shifts who can use the eFINDS system (more details below)

3. Prepare your patients and residents

- a. Plan to communicate your plans with patients, residents and their families/caregivers

4. Be ready to use essential HCS data applications, including:

- a. Health Electronic Response Data System (HERDS) - HERDS surveys will be conducted with *Hospitals, Adult Care Facilities, Nursing Homes*, to collect information regarding potential facility beds needed or beds available for evacuation efforts
 - i. When these surveys are activated, all facilities, both in and out of evacuation zones, **MUST** respond
 - ii. Access to HERDS – HERDS may be accessed by the same individuals currently responding to COVID surveys.
- b. eFINDS Patient/Resident Tracking Application (hospitals, nursing homes ACFs and ICF/IID only): In the event that evacuation of hospitals, nursing homes or adult care facilities becomes necessary, the NYSDOH is reminding facilities that they must use the eFINDS system to track the movement of all patients and residents between sending (evacuating) and receiving facilities.
 - i. Access to eFINDS: HCS Communications Directory Roles that must be assigned for access to eFINDS: eFINDS Data Reporting Administrator or eFINDS Data Reporter.
 - ii. Should evacuations become necessary, the NYSDOH will send an alert to facilities to begin preparing their patients and residents with wristbands and registering their wristband barcode in the eFINDS system.
 - The name of the Evacuation Operation to select when entering/your patient/resident data into eFINDS for Tropical Storm Elsa is: **“2021-07-08 TROPICAL STORM ELSA - NYC AND LONG ISLAND”**
 - iii. Make sure that staff who have been trained on the use of the system are available to perform this function on every shift.

- iv. For help with eFINDS use, please send email to: efinds@health.ny.gov. eFINDS reference information is available on the HCS. Just enter “eFINDS” in the search box on HCS, and all eFINDS help resources will be available.
- c. The HCS Communications Directory - all business and emergency contact information for key administrators and roles in the Communications Directory must be updated and accurate.
 - i. Your HCS Coordinator can assist in updating this information and assigning roles to access the applications mentioned above.

* TAL Categories:

TAL 1: Non-Ambulatory - Individuals unable to travel in a sitting position (e.g. require stretcher, are ventilator dependent or bariatric)

TAL 2: Wheelchair - Individuals who cannot walk on their own but are able to sit for an extended period of time

TAL 3: Ambulatory - Individuals with disabilities who are able to walk on their own without physical assistance.