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PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

To: Health Care Providers
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Subject: Preparing for and Responding to Hurricane Lee
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Preparing for and Responding to Hurricane Lee

Summary:

The National Weather Service, in coordination with the National Hurricane Center, is reporting that Maine will experience impacts from Hurricane Lee beginning Friday night into Saturday morning due to a westward shift in the storm track and widening storm radius. The storm is predicted to slowly weaken to a [Category 1 storm](#) and eventually downgrade to a tropical storm as it makes landfall. Tropical storm force winds, coastal flooding and high surf, and riverine flooding are all possible impacts from the storm. Central Maine Power has said that Maine could see impacts to the power grid which could be worsened due to the heavy rainfall received this summer and the risk of fallen trees or branches. Health care providers can help Mainers prepare for and respond to the hurricane.

Potential impacts on public health and/or healthcare systems:

- Flooding: healthcare facilities, business and homes in low-lying coastal areas may experience flooding or have access routes cutoff due to storm surge or inland flooding.
- Power outages: loss of power may cause health care facilities to experience a surge from heat-related emergencies from lack of air conditioning, improper vaccine storage, or transfer of individuals who are reliant on electrically dependent medical devices. Individuals may experience food spoilage and private well contamination.
- Illness: increased risk of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning among people and animals from improper placement and use of generators, respiratory illnesses from [mold](#) and mildew due to flooding, and food and waterborne illness.

Recommendations for health care providers and health care facilities:

- If you or your facility close due to water and wind damage, be aware of infection prevention and control concerns and review the [U.S. CDC Checklist for Infection Control Concerns When Reopening Healthcare Facilities Closed Due to Extensive Water and Wind Damage](#).
- [Ensure vaccines maintain cold chain in the event of a power outage](#). Keep all vaccine refrigerators and freezers closed to conserve the cold mass of the vaccines, monitor temperatures, and if available, locate alternative storage with reliable power sources.
- You may see an increase in:
 - CO poisoning. Patients may present with symptoms including headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and altered mental status. For more information, see U.S. CDC: [Clinical Guidance for Carbon Monoxide Poisoning After a Disaster](#).
 - Food and waterborne illness. Patients may present with symptoms of nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal cramping due to 1) contaminated public and private water supplies and 2) lack of power and improper food storage of perishable foods, such as meats, seafood, and dairy. For more information, see Maine CDC's website: [Foodborne and Diarrheal Disease](#)
 - Mold-related illness. Patients may present with symptoms including stuffy nose, irritated eyes, wheezing, skin irritation or [invasive mold infections](#) especially among persons with asthma, allergies, other breathing conditions, or immune compromise.

Recommendations for patients:

- Monitor the status of the storm with up-to-date information from the [Maine Emergency Management Agency](#) and [National Weather Service Hurricane Center](#), and download the free [FEMA app](#) and [National Weather Service app](#).
- Get family and [pets](#) ready: gather supplies, food, and medications and prepare an [emergency supply kit](#); a hurricane could cut off power, water, and roads may be flooded or blocked. Be ready to evacuate or stay at home.
- Dispose refrigerated, perishable foods, such as meats, seafood, and dairy if the power has been off for 4 hours or more.
- Charge cell phones and other electronic devices.
- Bring in all outdoor furniture, decorations, garbage cans and anything else that is not tied down.
- Ensure generators are properly installed, fueled, and in good working order.
- Check CO detector batteries to [prevent CO poisoning](#).

Additional Resources

- Maine CDC disease reporting and consultation line: 1-800-821-5821 (available 24/7)
- U.S. CDC: [Information for Professionals and Response Workers: Safety information for Health Care Professionals](#)
- U.S. CDC: [Information for Professionals and Response Workers: Preparedness and Safety Messaging for Hurricanes, Floodings, and Similar Disasters](#)
- U.S. CDC: [Preparing for a Hurricane or Other Tropical Storm](#)