

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
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TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay)

To: Maine Immunization Program Providers
From: Maine Immunization Program
Subject: Impending Fall Storm
Date: October 26, 2021

High winds and rain are expected to increase later this afternoon and last over the next several days, with power outages possible. Please follow your Emergency Storage and Handling Plan to ensure that your vaccines are stored safely or if necessary, moved to your designated back-up location that is equipped with a generator.

Key points to remember if a power failure occurs:

- Determine the cause of the power failure and estimate the time it will take to restore power. If a time frame for the restoration of power cannot be determined, do not leave vaccine in a non-working unit.
- Maintain thermal conditions during a power outage, never open the storage unit door until power is restored or it is determined that vaccines need to be packed in separate storage containers and/or transported to an alternative storage facility. The storage unit temperature may be maintained with the proper amount of water bottles in the refrigerator and frozen water bottles in the freezer.
- Begin preparing for your emergency procedure – shelter in place or transport, if necessary– after 30 minutes of a power outage. This includes pre-chilling on-site coolers or calling your emergency back-up location to prepare for your probable arrival. Please consider the type of vaccine you are transporting and the storage capacity at the location to which the vaccine is being moved.
- Place a digital data logger with your vaccines during transport and monitor the data logger thermometer to ensure vaccines remain within the appropriate temperature range(s). It is critical to avoid freezing vaccine during transport (improperly packing vaccine with ice can damage vaccines). Damage to the immunogenicity of a vaccine exposed to temperatures outside of the recommended range might not be visually apparent.
- Do not wait for refrigerator temperatures to reach 8°C (46° F) or freezer temperatures to reach -15°C (5°F) to begin your emergency vaccine procedures.
Reminder: immediate action is required when temperatures fall outside the recommended range(s).
- Document the date and time vaccine was moved to the back-up location and monitor temperatures in the back-up refrigerator/freezer where vaccine(s) are stored. Back-up storage units must adhere to the same requirements as the primary storage units.

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When power has been restored:

- Record the temperature in the unit as soon as possible after power has been restored. Continue to monitor the temperatures until they reach the normal 2–8°C range in the refrigerator, or -15°C or colder in the freezer. Be sure to record the duration of increased temperature exposure and the maximum temperature observed.
- Keep exposed vaccine separated from any new product you receive and continue to store at the proper temperature(s), if possible. Please note that during natural disasters, which may impact large geographical areas, vaccine shipments could be suspended due to road conditions.
- Do not discard or administer vaccines exposed to out-of-range temperatures. Mark exposed vaccine with the date and time and label “DO NOT USE”, move the exposed vaccine to an approved working storage unit at your backup location and contact the Maine Immunization Program at 207-287-3746.

Resources:

- [Packing Vaccines for Transport During Emergencies](#)
- [Vaccine Storage and Handling Toolkit](#)
- [Maine Immunization Program \(MIP\) Routine and Emergency Vaccine Storage and Handling Plan](#)