

New York State Department of Health

Advisory - Tropical Storm Isaias Guidance

July 31, 2020

for Hospital, Nursing Home, Adult Care Facility, Home Care, Hospice, and Diagnostic and Treatment Center Providers located in the five (5) boroughs of New York City, Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island, and counties in the Lower Hudson Valley.

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) is closely monitoring updates to the forecasted path of Tropical Storm Isaias. 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. This expectation will certainly change if the path of the storm should take a more westerly direction over the next few days.

As Isaias is still expected to remain a low to moderate storm as it passes to the southeast of the NYC/Long Island area, some potential impacts of the storm may include heavy rain of 4-8" or as much as 10 – 12", power outages, rip currents, minor storm surge of up to 5 feet, minor flooding, potentially high surf and potentially high winds.

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.

As any mandatory movement of patients and residents at facilities will be further impacted by the COVID pandemic and the need to separate individuals with varying COVID statuses to prevent transmission of the virus, it is essential that you review this guidance.

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

1. Mandatory Evacuation with COVID:

Should a mandatory evacuation become necessary for certain NYC Evacuation Zones and/or Slosh Zones of Long Island, facilities must assure that their patients

and residents are evacuated and segregated at receiving facilities, using the following COVID status cohorts:

- i. COVID (+): a positive molecular (i.e. PCR) test; includes recovering patients not yet testing (-)
- ii. COVID (-): a negative molecular (i.e. PCR) test
- iii. COVID Unknown – those not tested;

Transportation –

- As much as possible, move the COVID (-) cohort first
- Patients/Residents must be kept – socially distant on multi-person transports
- Must follow disinfection procedures following each transport run

2. Prepare your facility

- a. Review plans for the loss of power and/or water; test and confirm operations of emergency generator; confirm or acquire adequate generator fuel supply is onsite for at least 96 hours and emergency lighting;
- b. Facilities should be sure to refer to and confirm previously developed sending and receiving evacuation arrangements;

If there is a mandatory evacuation and you cannot find enough facilities to receive your evacuating patients or residents, you should call the NYSDOH Health Evacuation Center at: **833-978-2581**; **On Long Island and in Westchester county, facilities should contact their local OEMs for assistance in finding bed placement if they have exhausted all of their arrangements and cannot find enough receiving arrangements to meet their need.**

- c. Facilities should review with staff the facility evacuation and emergency response plans and protocols;
- d. Review procedures for discharge and other methods to reduce facility census if the needed;
- e. Consider alternate staffing arrangements; shifts and management of staffing shortages due to transportation impacts; the securing of needed supplies and preparations for staff that remain on site if roadways are not passable;
- f. Review and update patient/resident census and status by Transportation Asset Level (TALs) Categories (defined below)* and related transportation asset needs;

- g. Review communications plan; primary and back-up communication's systems including radios use at your facility or contacts for trained radio operators;
- h. Ensure adequacy of food service, water, pharmacy, medical and environmental service supplies at facility for at least 96 hours;
- i. Ensure full fuel, oxygen, and medical gases and other general supplies to last a period of 24 hours prior to and 72 hours following the storm;
- j. If there is a mandatory evacuation, the name of the eFINDS operation for hospitals, nursing homes and adult care facilities to use to enter your information will be: **2020-07-31 TROPICAL STORM ISAIAS NY;**
- k. Hospitals, nursing homes/ICFs and adult care facilities should ensure they have access to their eFINDS supplies in case of a mandatory 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;
- l. Assure you have up to date contact information for your local Office of Emergency Management if the facility is in need of services or supplies;
- m. Assure there are staff available on all shifts to use key NYSDOH Health Commerce System (HCS) Applications for planning, data submission and receipt of alerts and advisories.

3. Prepare your patients and residents

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

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

- o **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.
 - o **When these surveys are activated, all facilities, both in and out of evacuation zones, MUST respond.**
- o **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.

- **Access to eFINDS:** HCS Communications Directory Roles that must be assigned for access to eFINDS: *eFINDS Data Reporting Administrator* or *eFINDS Data Reporter*.
- **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, and to announce the name of the Evacuation Operation to select when registering enter your patient/resident data into eFINDS.
- Make sure that staff who have been trained on the use of the system are available to perform this function on every shift.
- 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.
- **The HCS Communications Directory** - all business and emergency contact information for key administrators and roles in the Communications Directory must be updated and accurate.
 - 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.