

Johns Hopkins Hospital

Business Continuity Guidelines for Inclement Weather: Ambulatory Services

Last update: 1/3/17

The ambulatory weather plan is a plan of action for ambulatory services on the Johns Hopkins East Baltimore campus for all weather emergencies, including hurricanes, rain/wind events, blizzards and other snow events. This plan includes the general approach to weather events, the decision-making process, rules of engagement for clinics and individual providers during a weather event, and a communication strategy for both the Hopkins community and community at large.

I. REFERENCES

- JHH Corporate and Administrative Policy Manual: Emergency Preparedness: Business Continuity: Inclement Weather.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Ambulatory Incident Command Team consists of the Executive Director, Ambulatory Director of Nursing, and the Ambulatory Administrator.
- Open/Close decisions during weather events are made centrally by the Ambulatory Incident Command Team and administrative/clinical leadership from other areas in JHM, with the goal of ensuring the safety of patients, providers, and staff.
- Access to care is essential to the safe care of patients, not only for those who are local to Johns Hopkins, but also for those who have traveled from afar. Accommodating patients whose visits are interrupted by weather events is a priority with all planning around weather events.
- Physician responsibilities
 - Physicians are considered essential employees during weather events.
 - Physicians must maintain close communication with clinical leadership during weather events, including through email, phone and text.
 - Physicians should make every effort to operate their practice aligned with the JHM open/close decisions.
 - We recognize that in an emergency situation travel can be unpredictable and even unsafe. While we expect every provider to make appropriate travel or housing arrangements to meet clinical obligations, this should not be done when patient or provider safety is jeopardized. In the rare instance that physicians anticipate not being able to meet their clinical obligations because of a weather- or disaster-related emergency, they must communicate that decision

to their departmental/divisional clinical leadership, including contingency plans to ensure timely patient access to their practice.

- Each clinic location must appoint an Ambulatory Weather Triad, which oversees staffing, operational, and communication issues during weather events.
 - Each clinic must annually (or as needed) update Ambulatory leadership with the name and contact information for their Ambulatory Weather Triad.
- Each Ambulatory Weather Triad must define essential staff who are required to be present during weather events.
 - Essential staff may include both employees of Johns Hopkins Hospital and Johns Hopkins University.
 - Essential staff must present during weather emergencies when that clinic has decided to remain open.
- Each Ambulatory Weather Triad that chooses to deviate from an open/close decision (other than those listed as 'always open clinics') must communicate that information.

III. PROCEDURES-ACTIVATION

- The decision to close clinic(s) during a weather event is made by Johns Hopkins Medicine leadership.
 - This decision will be made during a huddle call that includes leadership from the Johns Hopkins Hospital, the Clinical Practice Association, Ambulatory, Office of Johns Hopkins Physicians, Hospital Communications, identified functional units, and satellite clinics.
- Individual clinics are to remain open unless JHM leadership has announced a decision to close.
- Individual providers are to maintain clinic schedules during a weather event, unless JHM leadership has announced a decision to close.
 - All faculty and staff should make every effort to ensure safe travel to the East Baltimore campus, including consideration of local housing options should travel from home present risk.
 - Providers unable to travel to the East Baltimore campus due to a weather event should arrange coverage for their practice until they can travel to the East Baltimore campus.
 - Providers may independently determine those patients who should not travel during weather events and should reschedule them within a clinically appropriate time period.
- When JHM leadership makes a decision to close clinics, some clinics may choose to stay open.
 - The Ambulatory Weather Triad must communicate the decision to stay open during weather events with Ambulatory leadership.

- Some clinics have defined themselves as "always open" clinics that remain open even when JHM leadership has made the decision to close clinics. Those ambulatory clinics that consider themselves "always open" clinics include:
 - a. Ambulatory surgery
 - b. Dialysis centers
 - c. Express Testing
 - d. Lab @ GSS
 - e. Hemapheresis and Transfusion Services (HATS)
 - f. In-Vitro Fertilization at Greenspring Station
 - g. Oncology IPOP
 - h. Oncology infusion
 - i. Oncology clinics (East Baltimore campus)
 - j. Pediatrics/Rubenstein clinics (i.e., Harriet-Lane; Specialty clinics)
 - k. Radiation Oncology
 - l. Radiology (except Breast Imaging and DXA)
- Rapid Response Team (RRT) staffing in the Johns Hopkins Outpatient Center will be considered an 'always open' team, but will staff according to hour-by-hour volumes.
 - Ambulatory leadership and RRT leadership shall remain in close communication during weather events.
 - a. When all patients for the day have been seen, the RRT personnel shall be sent home.
 - Lifeline shall continue to serve as backup.
- When Baltimore City, the State of Maryland or the United States Government has declared a state of emergency and closes all transportation, all clinics are to close, including "always open" clinics.
- Communications
 - Ambulatory leadership shall communicate the open/close decision with the Ambulatory Weather Triads as early as possible.
 - Ambulatory leadership shall communicate regularly with Security at the Johns Hopkins Hospital Outpatient Center to ensure proper direction to patients who present during weather events and security sweeps to locate patients who may have reached clinic waiting areas.
 - Ambulatory leadership shall communicate with the Administrator on Call, Facilities and Security leadership to ensure proper functioning of the Johns Hopkins Hospital Outpatient Center.

- Each clinic's Weather Triad shall be responsible for ensuring communications between Ambulatory leadership, clinic providers, clinic staff, and clinic patients so as to:
 - Ensure the successful operation of the practice during a weather event
 - Ensure that essential staff and providers will be present during weather events when clinic is open
 - Communicate the decision to remain open or close with all clinic, staff, and patients
 - Ensure that voicemail messages are updated during weather events to appropriately instruct patients that call during weather event
 - Communicate the decision to remain open or closed with Access Services
 - Reschedule and accommodate as needed patients displaced by weather events
- Recommended Triad practice
 - Contacting Staff
 - Clinic managers are responsible for creating an Emergency Phone Tree with staff's names and best contact number. Triad leadership is responsible for contacting employees if there is a clinic closure.
 - Make sure staff are aware of the weather hotline phone number and website as a backup source for information.
 - Contacting Patients
 - Clinic managers must coordinate patient outreach efforts between office medical office coordinators, clinic staff, and Access Services, leveraging Televox capabilities to reduce dependence on manual calls.
 - If bad weather is predicted, the clinic manager should print the Department Appointment Report (DAR) to include patient name, MRN, appointment type and their phone numbers. The DAR should be distributed among staff with assignments provided of notifying patients of any changes to their appointment.
 - The clinic manager will set the out of office voicemail on all the clinic phone lines.
 - Contingency Plans
 - Clinic managers and nurse managers are to create a list of staff who are willing to provide transport and/or 4 wheel drive to pick up staff that live in their general vicinity or those who can't get to work otherwise.

IV. PROCEDURES-TERMINATION

- The decision to end a weather event is made by Johns Hopkins Medicine leadership.
 - This decision will be made during a huddle call that includes representatives from Johns Hopkins Hospital, the Clinical Practice Association, Ambulatory, Office of Johns Hopkins Physicians, Johns Hopkins Hospital Communications, identified functional units, and satellite clinic leadership.