

**Associate  
Hurricane  
Preparedness  
Handbook**

**Welcome to:  
2012  
*Florida's  
Hurricane  
Season!***

This publication is an adapted copy of Health First's *Associate Hurricane Preparedness Handbook* which is not copyrighted and was offered for other hospitals to use in helping their associates prepare for the severe weather associated with hurricanes. It was taken from the digital files of VHA Southeast's hurricane conference, "Ready, Set, Blow... Hurricane Lessons for Hospital Leaders", held March 28 – 29, 2005, in Orlando.

Greetings to All,

We're pleased to present the Munroe Regional Medical Center's *Associate Hurricane Preparedness Handbook*. This handbook is intended for you to use as a resource as we prepare for the hurricane season. We're very fortunate to live in a mild climate. But, much like our friends in California who have to prepare for earthquakes, or our friends in the North who prepare to deal with ice and snow storms in the winter months, we must take the opportunity to plan for hurricane season — June through November.

As you know, our facilities and services are just as critical as local emergency management services and law enforcement when a storm threatens. Therefore, it's necessary to plan in advance for hurricanes, severe weather, and other disaster scenarios to support our patients and community so we're prepared if they occur. Every associate's participation is essential to assure we continue providing optimum care to our patients. Your department management team will be the first and foremost source of information for you in planning for hurricanes and implementation of our Hurricane Preparedness Plan. We've also provided this *Associate Hurricane Preparedness Handbook* so you can prepare your family and household for a hurricane. This handbook also explains your role in our hurricane plan. Your participation is essential to the success of this plan, in which every associate will have a role. Each associate is assigned to one or more of the response phases, which include the pre-storm, during-storm, and post-storm phases. Associates may also be called upon to work in different settings or job functions as needs are identified. Every attempt will be made to accommodate an associate's personal needs whenever possible. Information pertaining to our associate exemption process are highlighted in this handbook. Remember, our patients and communities are counting on us—and we're counting on you. The *Associate Hurricane Preparedness Handbook* will be posted electronically on the Bulletin Board and is designed to help you better prepare for the hurricane season. Please discuss your role in the hurricane plan with your department manager and your family.

Together, we're *truly* better!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Clark, Sr.', with a stylized, cursive script.

Paul Clark, Sr. V.P.  
Chief Operating Officer  
Munroe Regional Medical Center

## INTRODUCTION

We understand the power of hurricanes and the impact they have on coastal and inland communities. To help you understand how Munroe Regional Medical Center responds in the event of a hurricane or severe weather situation, we've created this *Associate Hurricane Preparedness Handbook* using information from Munroe Regional Medical Center's Hurricane Preparedness Plan. This handbook is designed to inform you about what to expect during a hurricane and how our organization responds to ensure that the health needs of our community are met. Areas addressed in this handbook include associate responsibility, storm communication, safety, sheltering, staffing of special needs shelters, and more. We also recommend that you review our Hurricane Preparedness Plan for a more complete understanding of the topics in this handbook.

**Please note:** Because each department is responsible for developing its own response in support of our Hurricane Preparedness Plan, be sure to check with your department director or supervisor for your specific responsibilities during a hurricane.

## THE HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS PLAN AND YOU

There's an old adage that "Planning is everything." Munroe prides itself on being prepared. That's why the Hurricane Preparedness Plan was written — to ensure that our patients' and community's needs are met while allowing you to meet family responsibilities during and after a hurricane. This policy can be found on the intranet Bulletin Board, Policies and Procedures, Top Left Green area under Global Books and listed as Emergency Preparedness and in your department's Emergency Management.

### *Education*

This is the time to discuss hurricane preparedness and communicate our H-Plan with all associates at the start of hurricane season. Informing new associates and reminding veterans of the about their role during a hurricane is very important. That's why all new associates receive information on hurricane preparedness during their department or unit orientation and before the start of hurricane season (June 1) each year. (There is a Net Learning module on the hurricane plan that all are required to complete before the end of July each year.)

### *Exemption forms*

Munroe understands some associates may have extenuating circumstances that make it impossible for them to work during a storm. Because of these situations, an associate may be considered exempt and excused from working during a storm (**Team A**). To be eligible, the associate must submit an Exemption Form annually to his or her manager; review Attachment 14 of the Hurricane Preparedness Plan, "Staffing Under Emergency Situations"; and meet at least one of the following criteria:

- You provide care for an elderly, immediate relative who cannot care for himself or herself on a routine basis. There are no other adult family members to provide this care. This person would not otherwise qualify for a special needs shelter.

- You provide care that cannot otherwise be delivered for an immediate relative who is handicapped, or otherwise has a chronic illness.
- You are the sole caregiver of a child less than two years of age and cannot make other arrangements.
- When both parents of a child less than two years old, one of whom works for another emergency services employer (i.e. nursing, other hospital, law enforcement, fire/rescue and city employee) are required to work and have simultaneous roles during a storm, the associate is exempt.
- When both parents of a child less than two years old work at Munroe Regional Medical Center facilities and normally would have simultaneous roles during a storm, one is exempt.

**Please note:**

- While an approved Exemption Form excuses an associate from working during a storm, **the associate will be required to work pre- and/or post-storm (Team B).**
- Munroe also understands that sudden life changes occur, so emergency exemptions may be granted by your department director.
- If your situation doesn't fit into any of the categories above, you may be asked to work during a hurricane.

**STORM COMMUNICATIONS**

Communication is the key to emergency preparedness. In the event of an impending storm, the Tele-Talk line (**352-402-5333 or extension 5333**) is revised on a regular basis to give associates up-to-date information on facility preparations, conditions and some work schedule expectations. However, Tele-Talk isn't intended to replace communicating with your supervisor, manager, or director, so be sure to check your home answering machine frequently and/or keep in touch with your department for your responsibilities during/after a storm. Arrangements have been made with local radio and television stations to transmit information for our associates. For the latest updates in the event of a hurricane, tune to any of the following:

Magic 101.3 FM	WKSG Daystar 89.5 FM
VNN – Villages News Net.	WTKK/WSKY FM
WCFI 1290 AM	WOCA 1370 AM
WCJB TV20	WOFL FOX 35
WESH Newschannel 2	WOGK K-Country 93.7 FM
WFTV Channel 9	WRGO Oldies 92.9 FM
WIFL-WOW 104.3 FM	WRUF 850 AM
WIND 92.5 & 99.5 FM	WTRS 102.3/Q92.9 FM
WKMG Local 6	WUFT Classic 89.5 FM
WWKO 91.3 FM	WUFT News Channel 5

**All radio stations listed have agreed to carry Hospital announcements.**

## **STORM STAFFING**

All associates play key roles in meeting the needs of our community when faced with a hurricane. While many of our associates work within the hospital setting, others work in ancillary and support departments and are not covered specifically under a hospital hurricane plan. Their roles in support of the organizational plan may require them to work in other areas not specific to their regular jobs by staffing the “Labor Pool”. Departments will usually request additional staffing support in May, before the start of hurricane season. The needs of clinical and non-clinical departments to assign work and respite areas are coordinated through the Human Resources Department. One challenge we face during a storm is facility security. Many don’t understand that **hospitals are not shelters**. To ensure those inside our facilities truly belong there, associates working before, during, or after a storm will be required to show their Munroe Regional identification badges before entering and exiting a facility. In addition, the identification badges are also used for associates to return to the hospital when roads are cleared for travel and a curfew is still in-force.

### ***Munroe Regional’s Hospital Command Center (HCC)/Emergency Operations Center (EOC)***

Munroe Regional’s HCC/EOC ensures the adequacy of the Hospital’s (including TimberRidge Emergency Center) storm preparations and provides the communications link with State and County Emergency Management officials. Preparations coordinated through the HCC/EOC include facility staffing, patient census, bed availability, computer system status, sleeping area designations, and attaining 100% readiness before the storm hits. The HCC/EOC is located in the Dining Room Conference Room directly adjacent to the Dining Room. HCC/EOC staffing is defined by the Hurricane Preparedness Plan with the facility being operational 12 to 24 hours prior to the expected arrival of the storm.

### ***Sleeping arrangements***

Maintaining mental alertness during a stressful situation, especially a hurricane, is very important. Proper rest is paramount to having a sharp team, ready for anything. Because of this, respite hours and areas are assigned to all associates and physicians who are at the facility during the storm. These areas will be identified and assigned by the Human Resources Department. Personnel will receive their specific room assignments when they report for hurricane duty. Remember to bring your own pillows, linens, towels, soap, toilet articles, etc.

### ***Facility safety***

A common question during a hurricane or severe storm is, “How safe is the facility?” While the nature of a disaster prevents a guarantee of total safety, as healthcare workers who stay during a storm, we accept a level of risk to serve our patients. Munroe Regional does perform regular vulnerability assessments of each facility to make them as safe as possible. Experienced structural engineers assess each building’s physical strengths and weaknesses.

### ***Volunteers***

To make sure we can accommodate a high demand for services should a hurricane directly impact our area, we're asking that our volunteers and auxiliaries be available after a storm. During the storm, they should seek other shelter or evacuate when directed to do so by the Marion County Office of Emergency Management.

### ***Sheltering***

Caring for patients in the hospital, as well as those injured after hurricane arrival, requires a well-staffed facility. In the event roads are impassable after a storm, the facilities must have enough staff to operate without interruption for a few days. Each department is responsible for its own staffing plans, so be sure to talk with your department director, manager, or supervisor.

Three distinct groups will be in the facility during a hurricane, each with unique circumstances. These include patients, associates, and physicians. A great deal of planning has been directed toward this subject, and each group is addressed below:

#### **1. Patients and their families:**

Patients are our primary concern and the reason we're here, so it's important to reassure them and their families during a hurricane. In the event of a storm, family members are always encouraged to seek the safety of an approved shelter.

However, if requested, one family member will be allowed to stay with each patient. The family member will be required to bring the same supplies as Munroe associates for his or her own use. (See *What to bring when you come to work* on page 9.)

#### **2. Associates and their families:**

Our associates are critical to Munroe's success in any emergency, especially a hurricane, and Munroe understands the stress of preparing a home and family for a storm. We understand how important it is to ensure your family's safety, so the following services will be provided as needed:

- For associates who volunteer or are required to work during or post-storm, please make arrangements in advance for your personal choice of childcare outside the hospital.
- If schools and daycare facilities aren't open post-storm, please consider your options for providing childcare for your children with family or personal caregivers that will be available during these emergent times. .
- Associates working during a storm will be given time before the storm to prepare their homes. (See *"Preparing Your Home and Property for a Storm."*) If your family members must evacuate, they should take enough supplies to be comfortable at their shelter location for at least 96 hours.
- A list of approved shelters in Marion County is available in the local phonebook, or by telephoning or visiting the Marion County Office of Emergency Management web site, or by checking Attachment 1 to Munroe's *Hurricane Preparedness Plan*.
- Associates scheduled to work post-storm should only evacuate when required and only go as far as necessary.

### **3. Physicians and their families:**

Volunteer physicians help maintain the readiness of our hospitals during a hurricane. Without their assistance, we wouldn't be prepared to care for our patients. In the event of a storm, physicians' families are always encouraged to seek the safety of an approved shelter. Please seek shelter for your families according to their personal needs at any one of the local shelters listed by Emergency Management. .

### **PREPARING YOUR WORK AREA**

Even with the diverse types of departments within Munroe Regional, there are a number of work area preparedness tasks that should be completed by everyone to prevent damage and loss, especially to protect electronic equipment. Your department plan/checklist may have other tasks to complete before a hurricane as well, so the following are only general guidelines for all Munroe's departments. Please be sure to check with your department director, manager, or supervisor to identify other items to be completed within your department before a storm:

#### ***Personal computers (PCs)***

- Disconnect your PC, monitor, keyboard, and mouse from each other and the wall power outlets. Be sure to also disconnect the network cable on the back of your PC (it looks like a telephone cable). Please note that the MIS Department recommends that you disconnect the network cable from the PC, and not from the wall. This allows you or MIS to more quickly get the equipment operating after a storm.
- If not already mounted above the floor, move any PC equipment off the floor at least 10 feet from a window, mark it with your name, and wrap it in plastic. Don't use red biohazard bags for this process.

#### ***Telephones***

- Please leave your phone connected.
- Wrap it in plastic and mark it with your name. As with PCs, do not use red biohazard bags in this process.

#### ***Fax machines, printers, and copiers***

- Please be sure all department fax machines, printers, and copiers are disconnected from outlets.
- Move them at least 10 feet away from windows and cover them in plastic. Once again, do not use red biohazard bags.

#### ***Miscellaneous desktop items***

- Please remove all papers, books, and loose materials from your desk.
- Place these materials in a box marked with your name and store it off the floor in a safe place.
- Finally, please be sure to check with your fellow associates to see if they need any assistance preparing their areas or the department. Teamwork is the cornerstone of hurricane preparation.

## **HURRICANES —**

### **Munroe Regional's Plan**

Munroe responds as a team to meet the varied health needs of our community in times of disaster. Each associate, department, and facility works together and with other agencies to meet any challenge. Because of this, it's important to understand how some entities prepare for an impending hurricane. More detailed information is available in the Hurricane Preparedness Plan, Section VIII of the *Emergency Management Plan*, so we encourage you to read it as well.

#### ***Special needs shelters***

Many individuals in our community require special assistance when they're evacuated, but not the acute care that's provided in hospitals. People with special needs may include those requiring 24-hour-a-day healthcare maintenance or medical equipment that requires 24-hour-a-day electrical power. Residents with special needs should register with the Marion County Office of Emergency Management before the hurricane season each year. When a hurricane is approaching, emergency officials will open the special needs shelters as designated for the particular season.

## **THE FACILITIES**

### ***Munroe Regional Medical Center***

Munroe Regional Medical Center is Marion County's largest hospital, and remains open and adequately staffed during a hurricane. The Munroe Regional's Emergency Operations Center is located here and directs the storm preparations of the entire organization. The team in the HCC/EOC will be in constant communication with County and State emergency officials for storm updates, and will update the Tele-Talk line regularly. Patients ready for discharge will go home so additional beds are available for patients transferred from other facilities, area dialysis patients, and others who require hospitalization. Additional quantities of medications, food, water, linen, medical/surgical supplies, etc. are delivered. The facility will be secured, with access granted only to those authorized to be there.

### ***TimberRidge Emergency Center***

TimberRidge Emergency Center also remains open in the event of a hurricane to help meet the emergency needs of the citizens in the western part of the County. The facility will be secured, with access granted only to those authorized or needing to be there.

### ***Support services***

All departments fill a variety of roles in a hurricane situation, which may include working in different settings or job functions as needs are identified. Some members of the Munroe Regional administrative team will report to Munroe Regional's Emergency Operations Center during a storm, while others will provide post-storm relief. The Marketing and Public Information Department representative will communicate our disaster preparations to local newspapers, radio, and television media, update the Tele-Talk line, and field the numerous calls about the status of our patients and hospital after a storm. (Finance associates will work with our banks and Credit Union to make sure funds are available to the hospital in the event of storm damage to local financial institutions.)

**We hope this information answers any questions you may have about your role in the event of a hurricane or severe storm. Please talk with your director, manager, or supervisor about any unanswered questions.**

## **PREPARING YOUR HOME AND PROPERTY FOR A STORM**

There are a number of sources available with information on preparing your home in the event of a hurricane or severe weather. The following list will get you started.

1. Have materials ready to protect your home, such as storm shutters and/or plywood.
2. Have materials on hand to repair storm damage, including plywood and nails, a hammer and saw, plastic sheets, and duct tape. They can help prevent further damage.
3. Have emergency supplies in waterproof containers such as canned food (with a manual can opener), diapers and baby formula, water (one gallon per person per day), matches, and disposable eating utensils. Other items to have on hand include medicine\* and a first-aid kit, a radio with batteries, cooking equipment, a can of gasoline (fill car tanks beforehand), cash, plain bleach, a fire extinguisher, and sleeping bags and blankets.
4. Protect important documents such as insurance policies, pictures, etc., in waterproof containers. \*Please make sure all prescription medications are filled beforehand.

***72 Hour Family Disaster Survival Kit (Extracted from Marion County Sheriff's Office, Division of Emergency Management publication.) This is geared toward staying in a shelter.***

- Non-perishable food and small cans of food
- Bottled water (1 gallon /person/day) and other beverages, juices and soft drinks
- Manual can opener, eating utensils, paper plates, cups, napkins/paper towels
- Personal medications, pills, prescriptions and a first aid kit
- Infant formula/food/diapers/toys/games
- Cots, sleeping bags, blankets, pillows, and folding chairs
- Personal hygiene items and change of clothing
- Wet and cold weather clothing
- Flashlight, battery powered radio/TV, and extra batteries
- Cards, games, books, and toys
- Checks or Travelers Checks

**Do not take: pets (except where allowed), alcoholic beverages or weapons of any kind to public shelters.**

### ***What to bring when you come to work***

When preparing to report for duty during or after a storm, you'll need to have some essential items:

1. Your ID badge
2. A small overnight bag (do not over-pack)
3. Sleeping bags or linens, blankets, and pillows
4. A change of clothing, uniforms, and shoes
5. Personal toiletries, soap and a towel
6. Prescription medications
7. Cash and small change
8. Nonperishable food snacks for 48 to 72 hours
9. Bottled water – 3 gallons

### **WHAT ABOUT THE FAMILY PET?**

Pets are an important part of the family for many of us, so planning for their sheltering should also occur before an impending storm. Unfortunately, pets aren't permitted in the hospital, and many public disaster shelters cannot accept pets because of health and safety regulations (except for service animals that assist people with disabilities). In the midst of a disaster, it may be impossible to find shelter for your animals—so plan now. Leaving pets behind, even if you try to create a safe place in your home, can result in their being injured, lost, or worse. Frightened animals can quickly slip out of open doors, broken windows, or damaged areas of your home left exposed by the disaster event. The following information will help you plan for your pet's care in the event of a severe storm or hurricane.

#### ***Tips on locating a safe place for your pet***

1. Set up a buddy system with friends, neighbors or relatives.
2. Contact hotels and check policies on accepting pets. If you have prior notice of an impending disaster, call ahead for reservations. Online you can check out <http://www.petswelcome.com> for hotels that accept pets.
3. Contact boarding kennels in your area. Be sure to make a personal visit well in advance to make sure that it's a facility where you'll be comfortable leaving your pet.
4. Ask your veterinarian if he or she would be able to board your pet.

#### ***Leaving your pet behind as a last resort***

- If you must leave without your pet, you should leave it in your home.
- Avoid leaving your pet in rooms with hazards such as windows, hanging plants, or pictures in large frames. Consider utility areas or bathrooms.
- Leave familiar items such as the pet's normal bedding and favorite toys.
- In case of flooding, the location should have access to high counters to which pets can escape.
- Set up two separate locations if you have cats and dogs. Even if they normally get along, the anxiety of an emergency situation can cause pets to act irrationally.
- Keep small pets away from cats and dogs.
- Under no circumstances should you ever leave your pet tied up outside or let it loose to fend for itself.

- In large disasters where loose animals become a problem, animal control shelters often have no other option than to treat these animals as abandoned. Many pets have to be adopted, fostered, or euthanized.
- Provide water in a heavy bowl that cannot be tipped over. Filling the bathtub with water will provide drinking water for several days, providing your pet will drink from it.
- Paste labels clearly near entrances for rescue workers to see what animals they'll encounter and a contact number.

***After the disaster***

- After the storm, familiar surroundings sometimes have been rearranged, causing pets that rely on visual or scent cues to become disoriented.
- Walk your pet on a leash until it becomes reoriented to its surroundings.
- Give your pet small amounts of food and water several times a day, increasing to normal volumes over three to four days.
- Let your pet have plenty of uninterrupted sleep.
- If you still have your pet's favorite toys, encourage it to play.

This will allow your pet to recover from the stress and trauma.

- If you and your pet are separated, pay daily visits to local shelters, animal control facilities, and kennels until you've found it. A phone call isn't as effective as a visit.
- Remember, you're your pet's guardian and ultimately responsible for its survival and well being in the event of a disaster. After all, pets are family too.*

**Together,  
we're better  
at weathering  
the storm.**

**NOTES**

Munroe Regional's *Associate Hurricane Preparedness Handbook* was adapted for Munroe Regional Medical Center's use by the Emergency Services Department & Emergency Preparedness Coordinator's office. You may wish to print this Associates Hurricane Handbook for your reference.