
Severe Weather Policy

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POLICY

Severe Weather refers to an emergency response for Severe Weather. **Severe Weather** may be a pre-condition or be followed by a **Code Orange** (EP-09), a **Code Gray** (EP-06) or a **Code Green** (EP-03).

Lennox and Addington County General Hospital (“LACGH”) is committed to ensuring the safety of all staff, patients, caregiver, visitors and third party contractors. The Severe Weather Policy is intended to provide direction for potential hazardous weather/earthquake conditions to prevent harm to hospital occupants and respond to damage to hospital property. It is the goal of LACGH to be able to continue providing patient care, including those who may be injured as a result of these same conditions.

It is the responsibility of all staff to make every effort to report to work for scheduled shifts or when recalled by the organization to assist in an emergency response, despite emergency conditions within the community. All staff unable to report to shifts should follow their “Call-In” procedure.

Procedures specific to severe weather are provide below, including:

- Tornado
- Earthquake
- Severe Winter Weather
- Flooding

An algorithm to outline the response procedures for a **Severe Weather** is available (**See Appendix A: Awareness: extreme weather alerts and staff communications: Triggers, target audiences, and ‘Call to Action’ (CTA) messaging**)

DEFINITIONS

Blizzard: A winter weather system which, for a period of 3 hours or greater produces 60 km per hour winds or greater and falling/blowing snow which reduces visibility to less than 0.5 km.

Incident Command Centre: The role of the Incident Command Centre (Airhart Conference Room – (“ACR”)) is to gather all known information regarding an emergency response. The primary responsibilities of the Incident Command Centre are:

- Provide direction, coordination and control of the emergency response and recovery
- 2 (“Two”) “IMS Totes” are located in the ACR closet (red and blue)
- Establish short term and long term priorities
- Collect, evaluate and communicate information
- Manage resources
- Liaise with other agencies

Earthquake: A sudden, rapid shaking of the earth caused by the breaking and shifting of rock between the Earth’s surface. A low magnitude earthquake is often called an earth tremor.



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Freezing Rain: When rain or drizzle falls into sub-zero surfaces and then freeze upon impact with any surface they encounter, including the ground, trees, electrical wires, aircraft, and automobiles.

Flood: Flooding is a common phenomenon in Canada, resulting from an increase in streamflow beyond the point where the normal stream channel can contain the water.

Infrastructure: Building utilities that are necessary to maintain a safe environment, including:

- Electrical Power
- Water Supply/Quality
- Heating, Air Conditioning/Ventilation
- Steam
- Natural Gas, Medical Gas

Admin-on-Call (“AOC”): LACGH Administrator responsible for leadership and decision making after regular hospital hours, including weekends, as well as during emergencies and other situations.

Severe Winter Weather: Issued when multiple types of severe winter weather are expected to occur together and can include any one of the following: snow storm/squall, blizzard, or freezing rain.

Snow Squall: When cold air moves across larger open bodies of water (such as the Great Lakes) creating nearly stationary bands of cloud and snow.

Tornado: A violent whirling wind, characteristically accompanied by a funnel-shaped cloud extending down from a cumulonimbus cloud. Commonly known as a twister or cyclone, a tornado can be a few meters to about a kilometer wide where it touches the ground, with an average width of a few hundred meters. It can move over land for distances ranging from short hops to many kilometers, causing great damage wherever it descends.

Tornado Warning: A tornado warning is issued when an actual tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar in an area.

Warnings: Issued when there is increased certainty about the path and strength of a storm system. A watch may be upgraded to a warning, which is an urgent message that severe weather is either occurring or will occur. Warnings are usually issued six to 24 hours in advance, although some severe weather (such as thunderstorms and tornadoes) can occur rapidly, with less than a half hour notice.

Watch: Issued when conditions are favourable for the development of weather that poses a significant threat to public safety and property, but the occurrence, location, and/or timing of the weather situation is still too uncertain to issue a warning. It is intended to heighten public awareness of the potential impact of the event, and serves as a lead-up to a warning.

PROCEDURE

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1.0 Severe Weather Warnings Responsibilities

Switchboard

- 1.1 On being notified of a severe weather warning, **Switchboard** will:
 - 1.1.1 Monitor current and/or future weather conditions using the internet and/or radio to determine whether there is an imminent threat to the hospital
 - 1.1.2 If threat is identified, contact the Director Risk Management (business hours) or AOC (after hours) to notify them of the threat to the hospital and provide updates of the situation
 - 1.1.3 Make announcements based on the weather threat, as identified below in [Section 3.0](#)
 - 1.1.4 Security will continue to make rounds of the building, as per normal protocol
 - 1.1.5 Security will continue to monitor weather updates and provide update to Director Risk Management or AOC (after hours)
 - 1.1.6 Make announcement of the end of the threat/severe weather, as identified below in [Section 3.0](#)

- 1.2 On being notified of a severe weather warning, the Director Risk Management AOC (After Hours) will:
 - 1.2.1 The Director Risk Management or AOC (afterhours) should begin to make preparations to come on-site, when it is safe to do so
 - 1.2.2 Contact Facilities to complete a facility review
 - 1.2.3 Notify Information Technology (“IT”) Services or IT on-call (after-hours) to determine if IT infrastructure has been or has the potential to be impacted
 - 1.2.4 Work with the Switchboard to provide information to all staff and departments through appropriate communication methods based on the situation (e.g. IT failures)
 - 1.2.5 Continue monitoring the weather conditions using the internet, television, and radio
 - 1.2.6 Consult clinical managers to determine if elective surgeries and/or outpatient clinics should be cancelled due to severe weather conditions
 - 1.2.7 Implement **Code Grey** policies should the severe weather cause damage to the hospital
 - 1.2.8 Implement **Code Orange** if the number of casualties in the community is beyond the Emergency Department’s ability to treat under normal circumstances, and
 - 1.2.9 Implement **Code Green** should an area of the hospital sustain damage that puts occupants at risk
 - 1.2.10 Coordinate the set-up of the Incident Command Centre, if appropriate, in the ACR
 - 1.2.11 Ensure an “**All Clear**” is announced when there is no longer a risk and make arrangements for a debrief meeting as appropriate

Facility Services

- 1.3 On being notified of a **severe weather warning**, Facility Services will:
 - 1.3.1 Complete a facility review regularly to determine impact of severe weather
 - 1.3.2 Report findings back to the Director Risk Management or AOC (afterhours) and provide hourly updates afterwards until warning/threat has ended

Information Technology Services

- 1.4 On being notified of a severe weather warning, Information Technology Services (“IT”) will:

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- 1.4.1 Complete an IT infrastructure review to determine the impact or potential impact of severe weather
- 1.4.2 Report findings back to Director Risk Management or AOC (afterhours) and provide hourly updates afterwards until warning/threat has ended

Directors/Managers

- 1.5 On being notified of a severe weather warning, Directors/Managers will:
 - 1.5.1 Ensure on-duty staff/affiliates are aware of the warning, including staff/affiliates arriving for shift change
 - 1.5.2 Ensure warning protocols are being consistently followed, and
 - 1.5.3 Notify the Director Risk Management of any injuries or building damage as a result of the severe weather

Charge Nurse

- 1.6 On being notified of a severe weather warning:
 - 1.6.1 Charge Nurse to provide updates on department's situation to the Director of Nursing (business hours) or AOC (after hours) every hour, providing information on:
 - Building damages
 - Staff/patient injuries
 - Any additional urgent situations
 - Provide direction to mobile patients and visitors on safe practices, based on the severe weather threat, as outlined below in [Section 2.0](#)

2.0 Specific Severe Weather Warnings Protocols

2.1 Tornado

- 2.1.1 Stay away from windows, doors and exterior walls
- 2.1.2 Clear corridors of non-essential items and keep essential items on one side of the hallway
- 2.1.3 Where possible, move patients away from windows to the corridor, shutting the door of the vacated room
- 2.1.4 If unable to reach a corridor for safety, take cover in a small room with no outside wall or window (e.g. washroom) or under the most secure object you can find (e.g. patient bed).
- 2.1.5 Be prepared to kneel facing a wall and cover your head with a pillow or mattress to protect from flying debris/glass. Instruct patients and visitors to do the same
- 2.1.6 Cover patients that cannot be moved with sheets or blankets to protect them from flying debris/glass
- 2.1.7 Do not use of elevators
- 2.1.8 Do not discharge or transfer any patients to leave the facility until the warning has ended
- 2.1.9 Ask visitors to remain inside the building for the duration of the warning period,
- 2.1.10 Call 333 for any emergency situations (e.g. **Code Blue**, **Code Grey**, **Code Green**, etc.)
- 2.1.11 Stay calm and reassure patients as much as possible, and
- 2.1.12 If building damage occurs that puts occupants at risk, evacuate the affected area when safe to do so, call 333 and initiate **Code Green**



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2.2 Earthquake

- 2.2.1 Move patients away from windows to avoid injury from breaking glass
- 2.2.2 Secure or remove patient equipment that might fall
- 2.2.3 Stay away from heavy unrestrained equipment, shelving units, or items stored on shelves
- 2.2.4 Remain indoors
- 2.2.5 Call 333 for any emergency situations (e.g. **Code Blue**, **Code Grey**, **Code Green**, etc.)
- 2.2.6 Stay calm and reassure patients as much as possible

2.3 Severe Winter Weather

- 2.3.1 Make every effort to report for work safely
- 2.3.2 Beware of increased slip and fall injury potential due to slippery or wet exterior or interior surfaces
- 2.3.3 Notify Security of slippery or unsafe walking/driving conditions – Security to notify Facilities
- 2.3.4 Avoid any unnecessary travel for meetings
- 2.3.5 Prepare to remain at the hospital to provide patient care should suitable relief not be able to report for work due to unsafe road conditions
- 2.3.6 Be attentive to hospital email bulletins or media reports to instruct staff/affiliates on potential alternative transportation or accommodation arrangements for staff/affiliates to be able to report to work
- 2.3.7 Encourage visitors to remain inside the building for the duration of severe weather
- 2.3.8 Discourage patients from traveling to a Designated Smoking Area during severe winter weather or when temperature conditions are below -20 Celsius
- 2.3.9 Call 333 for any emergency situations (e.g. **Code Blue**, **Code Grey**, **Code Green**, etc.)

2.4 Flooding

- 2.4.1 Make every effort to report for work safely
- 2.4.2 Beware of fast moving water and changes to water flow
- 2.4.4 Maintenance to monitor LACGH campus for rising water
- 2.4.5 Environmental Services to prepare for water diversion and clean up
- 2.4.5 Avoid unnecessary travel of meetings
- 2.4.5 Prepare to remain at the hospital to provide patient care should suitable relief not be able to report for work due to unsafe road conditions
- 2.4.6 Be attentive to hospital email bulletins or media reports to instruct staff/affiliates on potential alternative transportation or accommodation arrangements for staff/affiliates to be able to report to work
- 2.4.7 Encourage visitors to remain inside the building for the duration of severe weather
- 2.4.8 Discourage patients from traveling to a Designated Smoking Area during active flooding
- 2.4.9 Call 333 for any emergency situations (e.g. **Code Blue**, **Code Grey**, **Code Green**, etc)

3 **Specific Severe Weather Warnings Announcements from Switchboard**

3.4 Tornado

3.4.5 *During Threat to Hospital*

Upon direction from Director Risk Management or AOC (afterhours) **Switchboard** will:

- **Announce** “Tornado Warning. Patients, visitors and staff are to remain indoors until the warning has ended.” three times using the overhead paging system

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- **Repeat** announcement **every thirty (30) minutes** until the tornado warning has ended

3.4.6 *After Threat to Hospital has Ended*

Upon direction from Director Risk Management or AOC (afterhours) Switchboard will:

- **Announce** “*Tornado warning has ended.*” three times using the overhead paging system.

3.5 Earthquake

3.5.5 *During Threat to Hospital*

Upon direction from Director Risk Management or AOC (afterhours) Switchboard will:

- **Announce** “*Earthquake threat. Patients, visitors and staff are to remain indoors until the threat has ended or given further direction.*” three times using the overhead paging system
- **Repeat** announcement **every thirty (30) minutes** until the threat has ended or direction is given from Director Risk Management or AOC (afterhours)

3.5.6 *After Threat to Hospital has Ended*

Upon direction from MOC or Executive-On-Call, Security / Switchboard will:

- **Announce** “*Earthquake threat has ended.*” three times using the overhead paging system.

4 **Severe Weather Warning E-Mail Communication**

4.4 During threat to Hospital, Switchboard will send an email (template provided by Communications) to all users.

4.5 After threat to Hospital has ended, Switchboard will send an email (template provided by Communications) to all users.

REFERENCES

Code Grey

Code Green

Code Orange

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Appendix "A"

Awareness: extreme weather alerts and staff communications Triggers, target audiences, and 'call to action' (CTA) messaging

Weather (as per Environment Canada definitions)	Special Weather Statements: least urgent type of alert; conditions are unusual and could cause concern.	Watches: alert to weather conditions that are favorable for a storm or severe weather (only applies in some cases)	Warning: an urgent message that severe weather is either occurring or will occur. (usually 6 - 24 hours in advance, though some situations (e.g. tornado) develop faster)
Low likelihood, very high impact			
Tornado	Alert on-calls Call to Action (CTA): planning required Alert ED, Security: for your awareness; be ready Alert Facilities/, Environmental Service CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures	Alert on-calls CTA: planning required (can also choose to alert all staff at this point) Alert ED, Security CTA: for your awareness; be ready Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures	Alert all staff CTA: TBD by incident management team Alert on-calls CTA: planning/decisions required Alert EDs CTA: for your awareness; be ready/TBD/ Code Orange/Code Yellow implications Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures
Tropical storm Hurricane	Alert on-calls CTA: planning required Alert ED, Security CTA: For your awareness; be ready Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary	Alert on-calls CTA: planning/decisions required (may also choose to alert all staff) Alert ED, Security CTA: For your awareness; be ready Alert Facilities, Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary	Alert all staff CTA: TBD by incident management team Alert ED, Security CTA: for your awareness; be ready/TBD Alert Facilities/Environmental Services

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	precautionary measures	precautionary measures	CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures
High likelihood, high impact			
Blizzard	Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness		Alert all-staff CTA: Manage commute, Code Yellow implications Alert Facilities/Environmental Services/Scheduling CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness
Winter storm	Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness Alert: Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures	Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures	Alert all-staff CTA: Manage commute, Code Yellow implications Code Gray implications Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness Alert Facilities/Environmental Services/Scheduling CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures
Severe thunderstorm	Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures	Alert EDs CTA: for your awareness; may impact demand Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures	Code Yellow implications Code Gray implications Alert ED/Security CTA: for your awareness; may impact demand Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness Alert Facilities/Environmental Services

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			CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures
High likelihood, moderate impact			
Snowfall/Snow squall	Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness	Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness	Alert all-staff IF SIGNIFICANT AMOUNTS/TRAVEL IMPACTS FLAGGED IN EC WARNING CTA: Manage commute, Code Yellow implications Code Gray implications Alert ED/Security CTA: for your awareness; may impact demand Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness
Extreme cold Flash freeze	Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness Alert ED/Security CTA: for your awareness; may influence demands Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures		Alert all staff CTA: Close your windows to protect frozen pipes Alert EDs CTA: for your awareness; may influence demand Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness
Freezing rain	Alert	Alert all staff	

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	Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures	Manage commute Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures	
Rainfall	Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures	Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures	
High likelihood, limited impact			
Heat	Alert ED/Security: CTA: for your awareness – may impact demand	Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness Alert ED/Security CTA: for your awareness; may impact demand	
Wind	Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures	Alert on-calls CTA: for your awareness Alert Facilities/Environmental Services CTA: take any necessary precautionary measures	
To be assessed based on situation			
Advisories: for specific weather events that are less severe, but could still have impact, e.g. Freezing drizzle	Assess based on situation	Assess based on situation	Assess based on situation
Flood	Assess based on situation	Assess based on the situation	Assess based on situation
Weather: A generic weather warning*	Assess based on situation	Assess based on situation	Assess based on situation
<p>*A generic weather warning may be issued for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rare extreme weather events for which there is no suitable warning type • for other weather events during situations where the environment is vulnerable due to pre-existing conditions, e.g. 50 km/h winds following an ice storm which could cause structural wind damage. • for situations where the event is not expected to reach warning criteria values, but there is a special reason for the warning such as the first event of the season, or an off-season event. 			

<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/types-weather-forecasts-use/public/criteria-alerts.html>