

Practice Management Alert

Reader Question: Emergency Preparedness Rule May not Apply

Question: Does the federal emergency preparedness rule apply to a physician's office that only has a five-person staff?

Florida Subscriber

Answer: The number of staff at a physician's office does not necessarily matter, in terms of whether that office needs to comply with the emergency preparedness regulation.

Background: The emergency preparedness regulations were made in 2016 to establish "national emergency preparedness requirements to ensure adequate planning for both natural and man-made disasters, and coordination with federal, state, tribal, regional and local emergency preparedness systems," says the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The regulations went into effect November 2017, but there may still be some gray areas, in terms of what providers should prepare and what these specific regulations require.

The deciding factor is Medicare participation.

"The Emergency Preparedness requirements do not apply to physician offices that are not part of a certified Medicare participating facility. Physicians' offices or practices that are considered part of a certified Medicare participating facility would be required to meet the regulations," CMS says.

However, the gray area is such that CMS advises anyone who's still unsure to check in with local resources. "Please contact your specific facility CFO, CEO, Human Resource Staff, etc. to determine what Medicare certified provider number you are associated/certified under, which will determine which requirements you need to comply with," CMS says.