

Eli's Rehab Report

News Briefs: HHS Extends Help to Flood Victims in Iowa, Indiana

Medical facilities suffering from the recent floods in Iowa and Indiana have some welcome relief. Through his authority in the Public Health Service Act, HHS Secretary **Mike Leavitt** declared a public health emergency in these states, offering Medicare beneficiaries and their providers some flexibility for emergency health needs, according to a June 16 CMS press release.

For starters, CMS is waiving documentation burdens for beneficiaries who've been evacuated to different hospitals and nursing homes that may have no health care records of these beneficiaries.

Provided there is no fraud or abuse, CMS will also waive certain program requirements for institutional providers, including inpatient rehabilitation facilities. IRFs will not be required to count the evacuated patients in determining compliance with the 60 percent rule requirement. (The 60 percent rule says at least 60 percent of the population in a facility must be deemed eligible for that facility.)

Among other things, CMS will expand the definition of "home" to allow those Medicare beneficiaries who are receiving home health services to receive those services in alternative sites. In addition, CMS will be working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to manage lost, stolen, or left behind DME equipment.