

Eli's Hospice Insider

Disaster Planning: New Emergency Preparedness Requirement On Deck

Does your emergency plan contain these 4 elements CMS wants?

You've probably already got an emergency preparedness plan in place, but now Medicare wants to make sure it's up to snuff.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services wants to mandate that 17 provider types including home health agencies and hospices have adequate emergency preparedness plans, it says in the Dec. 27, 2013, Federal Register.

"As a result of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the subsequent anthrax attacks, the catastrophic hurricanes in the Gulf Coast states in 2005, flooding in the Midwestern states in 2008, tornadoes and floods in the spring of 2011, the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, and Hurricane Sandy in 2012, readiness for public health emergencies has been put on the national agenda," CMS says in the rule.

Providers' emergency plans should include four elements, CMS proposes: risk assessment and planning; policies and procedures; communication plan; and training and testing.

Do this: "Home health and hospice providers should conduct a thorough analysis of their emergency preparedness plans to determine gaps and obtain an accurate burden estimate related to implementing the proposed requirements," the **National Association for Home Care & Hospice** advises.

In the meantime, make sure you have your patient priority list up to date in case crippling weather hits your area.

For example: In Independence, Mo., providers may not be able to see all the patients on their lists, but they are prioritizing those with the highest needs, reports **Fox 4 News** in Kansas City. In the wake of a recent snow storm, **Crossroads Hospice** nurse **Karen Owen** navigated snowy hills to get to a "very fragile" MS patient. "She is at high risk for aspiration and pneumonia. She cannot swallow," said Owen. But instead of seeing five other patients that day as usual, Owen saw only one.

The proposed rule is at <https://federalregister.gov/a/2013-30724>.