

Health Information Compliance Alert

Industry Notes: HHS Declares a Public Health Emergency for Hurricane Ida

With the aftermath of Hurricane Ida leaving four states devastated by the storm, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declares public health emergencies (PHEs) to assist with the efforts.

Details: In the first of the two determinations, HHS Secretary **Xavier Becerra** declared a PHE in Louisiana and Mississippi on Aug. 28 with an effective date set retroactively to Aug. 26. For New Jersey and New York, the PHE has an effective date of Sept. 1.

"Hurricane Ida made landfall as an extremely dangerous storm and is carving a path of destruction that poses a significant threat to health and safety," Secretary Becerra said in an Aug. 30 release after declaring the first PHE. "These declarations and waivers help ensure that some of the most vulnerable residents of Louisiana and Mississippi - beneficiaries of Medicare and Medicaid - have continuous access to the care they need in the aftermath of this storm. We stand ready to provide additional public health and medical support to help impacted communities respond and recover."

The Hurricane Ida PHEs join two already existing PHEs for the COVID-19 pandemic and the opioid crisis.

The HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) also issued Hurricane Ida guidance on HIPAA, reminding that during a PHE the HHS Secretary does have the authority to waive certain sanctions and penalties for covered entities (CEs) with 1135 waivers.

Resources: Read the PHE declarations at www.phe.gov/emergency/news/healthactions/phe/Pages/default.aspx. Find the OCR guidance on HIPAA and Hurricane Ida at www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2021-hurricane-ida-hipaa-bulletin.pdf?language=en. Review the HHS release on the storm and additional resources at www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/08/30/hhs-secretary-becerra-declares-public-health-emergencies-states-louisiana-and-mississippi-due-to-hurricane-ida.html.



Get the Scoop on ONC's 2021 Tech Forum

If you're interested in the feds, take on the future of health IT, then we've got some good news for you.

The HHS Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) is offering a two-day virtual conference for interested parties on Sept. 10 and 17 from noon until 5:00 p.m. EST.

The 2021 ONC Tech Forum sessions cover different but related timely topics and are divided into the following four tracks, according to the forum online materials:

- Track 1: Equity Considerations in Health IT
- Track 2: Advances in Health IT Quality and Interoperability
- Track 3: Public Health IT Infrastructure
- Track 4: Health IT: From Care Delivery to Research

With over 2,000 health IT partners participating online, the forum will include "two afternoons of plenary and breakout sessions on a variety of topics at the forefront of health IT," the agency says.

Peruse all the conference details and register at www.healthit.gov/news/events/2021-onc-tech-forum-virtual.

