

Incident Response Guide: Staff Shortage

Mission

To maintain continuity of operations in the event of staff shortage due to strikes, patient surge, or infectious disease outbreaks.

Directions

Read this entire response guide and review the Hospital Incident Management Team Activation chart. Use this response guide as a checklist to ensure all tasks are addressed and completed.

Objectives

- Maintain security of the hospital, patients, staff, and visitors
- Maintain ongoing patient care
- Provide for supplemental staffing from outside resources
- Communicate the situation status to patients, staff, and the public

Immediate Response (0 – 2 hours)

Section	Officer	Time	Action	Initials
Command	Incident Commander		Activate the Emergency Operations Plan, Staff Shortage Plan, Hospital Incident Management Team, and Hospital Commander Center.	
			Establish operational periods, objectives, and regular briefing schedule. Consider using the Incident Action Plan Quick Start for initial documentation of the incident.	
			Notify the hospital Chief Executive Officer, Board of Directors, and other appropriate internal and external officials of situation status.	
	Public Information Officer		Develop staff, patient, and community response messages to convey hospital preparations, services, and response.	
			Inform patients, staff, and families of situation status and provide regular updates.	
			Assist with notification of patients' families about the incident and inform them of the likelihood of transfer, if required.	
			Update internet, intranet, and social media to disseminate information about hospital status and alteration in services to patients, staff, families, and stakeholders.	
			As indicated, establish a media briefing area.	
			Monitor media outlets for updates on the incident and possible impacts on the hospital. Communicate information via regular briefings to Section Chiefs and the Incident Commander.	
	Liaison Officer		Notify community partners in accordance with local policies and procedures (e.g., consider local Emergency Operations Center, other area hospitals, local emergency medical services, ambulance providers, and healthcare coalition coordinator), to determine incident details, community status, and establish contacts for requesting assistance with patient transfers, if indicated, or personnel not available in the hospital.	
			Communicate with other hospitals to determine their situation status, surge capacity, patient transfer, and bed availability.	

	Safety Officer		Ensure the safety of patients, staff, families, and visitors.	
			Complete the HICS 215A to assign, direct, and ensure safety actions are adhered to and completed.	

Immediate Response (0 – 2 hours)

Section	Branch/Unit	Time	Action	Initials
Operations	Section Chief		Refer to the Job Action Sheet for appropriate tasks.	
	Medical Care Branch Director		Review patient census and determine if discharges and appointment cancellations are required.	
			Assess patients for risk and to prioritize care and resources, as appropriate.	
			Identify priorities and transfer requirements.	
			Initiate ambulance diversion, if able.	
			Determine staff skill set required to continue patient care, and complete assessment of remaining staff to perform in alternate roles.	
	Security Branch Director		Secure the hospital and establish safe passage routes for patients, staff, visitors, and vendors.	
			Establish traffic and crowd control procedures.	
			Prepare for civil disturbances and protests.	
	Business Continuity Branch Director		Activate the Business Continuity Plan.	
Planning	Section Chief		Establish operational periods, incident objectives, and the Incident Action Plan in collaboration with the Incident Commander.	
			Initiate a plan for “just in time” new employee screening and orientation.	
			Coordinate with Logistics to arrange temporary housing for new staff as the situation warrants.	
	Situation Unit Leader		Prepare for patient tracking in the event of patient transfers.	
Logistics	Section Chief		Refer to the Job Action Sheet for appropriate tasks.	
	Support Branch Director		Direct all departments to adjust staffing schedules and to send to labor pool all staff above minimum necessary to maintain critical operations.	

			Obtain supplemental staffing.	
			Prepare an alternate mechanism to accept vendor deliveries if union workers refuse to cross picket lines.	
			Coordinate transportation services (ambulances, air medical services, and other transportation) to ensure safe staff and patient transit or relocation.	
Finance/ Administration	Section Chief		Implement time and cost accounting procedures, and prepare to estimate revenue losses.	
			Monitor costs associated with temporary staff utilization.	

Intermediate Response (2 – 12 hours)

Section	Officer	Time	Action	Initials
Command	Incident Commander		Obtain an assessment of staffing, equipment, and supply needs and the overall impact from the ongoing work stoppage on patient care, remaining staff, and the hospital.	
			Activate Medical-Technical Specialists if needed (e.g., Risk Management, Legal).	
			Monitor labor relations and progress of negotiations.	
	Public Information Officer		Continue media briefings and updates as warranted.	
			Continue with briefings and situation updates with staff, patients, and families; manage rumors.	
			Continue to update social media sites, if in use for the incident.	
	Liaison Officer		Continue communications with area hospitals and facilitate patient transfers.	
	Safety Officer		Conduct an ongoing analysis of exiting response actions for safety issues; implement corrective actions, and update the HICS Form 215A.	

Intermediate Response (2 – 12 hours)

Section	Branch/Unit	Time	Action	Initials
Operations	Section Chief		Refer to the Job Action Sheet for appropriate tasks.	
	Medical Care Branch Director		Continue the evaluation of patients and patient care; reevaluate the need to reduce or cancel nonessential services.	
			Reevaluate the need to continue ambulance diversion.	
			Reevaluate staffing needed to maintain essential services and to provide patient care.	
			Evaluate staff working in alternate roles and all supplemental staff.	
	Security Branch Director		Continue to provide hospital security and crowd control.	
Planning	Section Chief		Plan for the next operational period and hospital shift change, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Staff patterns <input type="checkbox"/> Location of labor pool <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital and campus entry and exit in view of curtailed services, and potential demonstrators <input type="checkbox"/> Impact of canceled procedures and appointments 	
	Resources Unit Leader		Continue staff and equipment tracking.	
	Situation Unit Leader		Continue patient and bed tracking.	
	Documentation Unit Leader		Ensure complete documentation of all postponed and canceled appointments or procedures.	
Logistics	Section Chief		Ensure behavioral health support to staff remaining on the job and performing alternate roles.	
	Service Branch Director		Provide for continuing communications systems and information technology systems functionality.	
Finance/ Administration	Section Chief		Activate additional positions within Finance/Administration Section based on the status of operations.	
	Time Unit Leader		Continue to track hours associated with the emergency response.	

	Procurement Unit Leader		Facilitate contracting for resources and services.	
	Cost Unit Leader		Track all costs, expenditures, and lost revenue.	

Extended Response (greater than 12 hours)

Section	Officer	Time	Action	Initials
Command	Incident Commander		Continue to monitor operations, consider the length of onsite operations, and determine the need for expanded postponement of procedures.	
			With the Public Information Officer, prepare to speak with the patients, staff, visitors, media and stakeholders.	
	Public Information Officer		Continue to hold regularly scheduled media and staff briefings.	
			Update social media with approved information.	
			Address social media issues as warranted; use social media for messaging as situation dictates.	
	Liaison Officer		Ensure continued updates of appropriate information to community partners, local authorities, and others as determined by the Incident Commander.	
Safety Officer		Continue to oversee safety measures for extended operations based on modifications in entry and exit points, visiting hours, entry onto campus, etc.		

Extended Response (greater than 12 hours)

Section	Branch/Unit	Time	Action	Initials
Operations	Section Chief		Refer to the Job Action Sheet for appropriate tasks.	
	Medical Care Branch Director		Continue evaluation of patients and patient care, and begin to plan for restoration of normal staffing and services.	
	Infrastructure Branch Director		Assess the impact of limited staffing on the ability to maintain the hospital infrastructure and a safe environment.	
	Security Branch Director		Assess the impact of limited staffing on ability to maintain a secure environment.	
	Business Continuity Branch Director		Assess the impact of limited staffing on ability to continue business operations.	

Planning	Section Chief		Ensure that updated information and intelligence is incorporated into the Incident Action Plan.	
	Situation Unit Leader		Ensure appropriate documentation of ongoing activities, including alterations in schedules, utilization of outside resources and patient tracking.	
	Demobilization Unit Leader		Ensure the Demobilization Plan is being readied.	
Logistics	Section Chief		Refer to the Job Action Sheet for appropriate tasks.	
	Support Branch Director		Prepare to release temporary staffing personnel.	
Finance/ Administration	Section Chief		Refer to the Job Action Sheet for appropriate tasks.	
	Cost Unit Leader		Continue to record ongoing and projected costs from postponements and modifications in operations.	

Demobilization/System Recovery

Section	Officer	Time	Action	Initials
Command	Incident Commander		Declare cessation of staff shortage and termination of the incident.	
			Activate the Demobilization Plan.	
			Oversee the hospital's return to normal operations.	
			With the Public Information Officer, prepare formal messaging to the media.	
	Public Information Officer		Conduct a final media briefing and assist with updating patients, staff, families, and others of the termination of the incident.	
	Liaison Officer		Communicate final hospital status and termination of the incident to local emergency medical services and any established outside agency contacts.	
	Safety Officer		Monitor and maintain a safe environment during the return to normal operations.	
			Ensure entry and exit points are open and functioning; ensure fire doors and alarms are in working order.	

Demobilization/System Recovery

Section	Branch/Unit	Time	Action	Initials
Operations	Section Chief		Refer to the Job Action Sheet for appropriate tasks.	
	Medical Care Branch Director		Plan for the return of staff and the release of temporary staff, in collaboration with the Logistics Section and the Demobilization Unit.	
			Discontinue ambulance diversion if applicable.	
			Reschedule canceled surgeries, procedures, and outpatient appointments.	
			Repatriate transferred patients, if applicable.	
	Security Branch Director		Return security operations to pre-incident status.	
Planning	Section Chief		Finalize and distribute the Demobilization Plan.	
			Ensure that all impacted clinical and support operations are relayed to appropriate sections for resolution.	
			Conduct debriefing and address appreciation to supplemental staffing personnel.	
			Conduct debriefings and hotwash with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Command Staff and section personnel <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative personnel <input type="checkbox"/> All staff <input type="checkbox"/> All volunteers 	
			Write an After Action Report and Corrective Action and Improvement Plan for submission to the Incident Commander, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Summary of the incident <input type="checkbox"/> Summary of actions taken <input type="checkbox"/> Actions that went well <input type="checkbox"/> Actions that could be improved <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendations for future response actions 	
	Documentation Unit Leader		Collect, collate, file, and secure completed documentation of actions, decisions, and activities.	
		Prepare a summary of the status and location of all patients, staff, and equipment. After approval by the Incident Commander, distribute it to appropriate external agencies.		

Logistics	Section Chief		Inventory all Hospital Command Center and hospital supplies and replenish as necessary, appropriate, and available.	
	Support Branch Director		Release temporary staff and other personnel to normal positions.	
Finance/ Administration	Section Chief		Finalize all expense and time reports, and summarize the costs of the response and recovery operations to submit to the Planning Section for inclusion in the After Action Report.	

Documents and Tools

Emergency Operations Plan, including:

- Staff Shortage Plan
- Emergency Operations Plan
- Employee Health Monitoring and Treatment Plan
- Patient, staff, and equipment tracking procedures
- Business Continuity Plan
- Behavioral Health Support Plan
- Security Plan
- Volunteer Utilization Plan
- Discharge Policy
- Memoranda of Understanding with appropriate agencies
- Risk Communication Plan
- Interoperable Communications Plan
- Demobilization Plan

Forms, including:

- HICS Incident Action Plan (IAP) Quick Start
- HICS 200 – Incident Action Plan (IAP) Cover Sheet
- HICS 201 – Incident Briefing
- HICS 202 – Incident Objectives
- HICS 203 – Organization Assignment List
- HICS 205A – Communications List
- HICS 214 – Activity Log
- HICS 215A – Incident Action Plan (IAP) Safety Analysis
- HICS 221 – Demobilization Check-Out
- HICS 251 – Facility System Status Report
- HICS 253 – Volunteer Registration
- HICS 254 – Disaster Victim/Patient Tracking

Job Action Sheets

Access to hospital organization chart

Television/radio/internet to monitor news

Telephone/cell phone/satellite phone/internet/amateur radio/2-way radio for communication

Hospital Incident Management Team Activation: Staff Shortage

Position	Immediate	Intermediate	Extended	Recovery
Incident Commander	X	X	X	X
Public Information Officer	X	X	X	X
Liaison Officer	X	X	X	X
Safety Officer	X	X	X	X
Operations Section Chief				
Medical Care Branch Director	X	X	X	X
Infrastructure Branch Director			X	X
Security Branch Director	X	X	X	X
Business Continuity Branch Director	X	X	X	X
Planning Section Chief				
Resources Unit Leader		X	X	X
Situation Unit Leader	X	X	X	X
Documentation Unit Leader		X	X	X
Demobilization Unit Leader			X	X
Logistics Section Chief				
Service Branch Director		X	X	X
Support Branch Director	X	X	X	X
Finance /Administration Section Chief				
Time Unit Leader		X	X	X
Procurement Unit Leader		X	X	X
Cost Unit Leader		X	X	X