

Incident Planning Guide: Wildland Fire

Definition

This Incident Planning Guide is intended to address the consequences and impact on a hospital when a wildland fire is either imminent or ongoing in the region. Hospitals are encouraged to customize this Incident Planning Guide for their specific requirements.

Scenario

The rainfall this year was less than average. Drought conditions and higher temperatures have created an increased risk for large scale wildfires. Over the last two days a wildland fire has burned hundreds of acres less than 40 miles from your hospital. Large areas have been evacuated and those remaining in their homes have been instructed to stay inside as much as possible and monitor television and radio for any changes or for the need to evacuate. A clinic near the wildland fire was forced to close because of heavy smoke and ash, and the difficulty of access due to road closures. There has been low humidity for several days and winds have picked up and shifted directions daily, driving smoke and ash to different areas through the community. The most recent shift in winds is pushing the fire toward your hospital. The Emergency Department is seeing an increase in patients with respiratory related distress. Some community skilled nursing facilities near the fire have begun to evacuate and 25 patients from one facility are being transported to your hospital. Schools are closing and many employees with children will need childcare to be able to come to work. Some staff are unable to return home at the end of their shifts due to road closures and air quality from smoke, yet area hotels are already full with evacuees, and staff are requesting that disaster tents and cots be set up so they can sleep on site. Staff and patients throughout the community report they can smell smoke in the air and are anxious. Further, they are confused by varying recommendations reported in the media regarding respiratory risks and the need for appropriate masks or other protection. Many homes appear to have been damaged or destroyed, including some hospital staff homes. Some of the many evacuated families have become separated. There is an emerging need for behavioral health counseling for patients, staff, and the public.

Does your Emergency Management Program address the following issues?

Mitigation

1.	Does your hospital address the threat and impact of a wildland fire in the annual Hazard Vulnerability Analysis, including the identification of mitigation strategies and tactics?
2.	Does your hospital participate in pre-incident local response planning with public safety officials (e.g., emergency medical services, fire, and law enforcement), local emergency management officials, other area hospitals, regional healthcare coalition coordinators, and other appropriate public and private organizations, including meetings and conference calls to plan and share status?
3.	Does your hospital have a plan to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Secure the hospital and prevent exposure of patients, staff, and facilities? <input type="checkbox"/> Individually control heating, ventilation, and air conditioning and return air for impacted areas?
4.	Does your hospital have a plan to initiate wildland fire facility hardening actions (protect windows; test backup generators; obtain supplemental supplies of essential items [food, water, medications, lighting]; activate amateur radio operators; top-off fuel tanks, etc.)?
5.	Does your hospital maintain a fire defensible space that includes all buildings on site?
6.	Does your hospital: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Map accessibility for the location of all on site fire hydrants, stand pipes, sprinkler systems, dry suppression systems, hose bibs, and other fire suppression systems? <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure all detection systems and procedures are in compliance with regulatory and accreditation standards? <input type="checkbox"/> Keep this information readily available in the Hospital Command Center? <input type="checkbox"/> Have this information reviewed by the local fire service? <input type="checkbox"/> Routinely test systems and document findings?

Preparedness

1.	Does your hospital have a Wildland Fire Plan?
2.	Does your hospital exercise the Wildland Fire Plan yearly and revise as needed?
3.	Does your hospital have preparedness strategies to reduce the risk from wildland fires?
4.	Does your hospital's Wildland Fire Plan have elements of an Evacuation Plan including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Procedures for immediate, controlled, and planned shelter-in-place, or evacuation of the hospital? <input type="checkbox"/> Authority to activate the plan and recover from the event? <input type="checkbox"/> Established priorities for patients and locations in the hospital? <input type="checkbox"/> Procedures and tracking systems for all patients (ambulatory and non-ambulatory), visitors, staff, and equipment? <input type="checkbox"/> Designated evacuation locations, assembly areas, and routing options, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Within the hospital (atrium, auditorium, gym, etc.)? o External to the hospital (adjacent building, nursing home, other hospitals, schools, etc.)? <input type="checkbox"/> Processes for initiating assembly area and holding area operations, including provision of adequate staff and equipment?

	<input type="checkbox"/> Processes to facilitate transfer of individual patient information, medications, and valuables with the patient? <input type="checkbox"/> Defined personnel roles in evacuation? <input type="checkbox"/> Processes to reassign staff (alternate sites/staging areas, other facilities)? <input type="checkbox"/> Coordination with ambulances, aeromedical services, and other transportation providers, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Additional out of area medical transportation? ○ Nonmedical transportation providers (school buses, other types of buses, etc.)? <input type="checkbox"/> Business Continuity Plans that include use of computerized patient and billing records from another, adequately secured, location?
5.	Does your hospital have criteria for cancelling home healthcare services, electives, admissions, surgeries, outpatient appointments, visiting hours, deliveries, other nonessential facility services (e.g., gift shop), and other activities (e.g., meetings) due to external health hazards resulting from wildland fire?
6.	Does your hospital have plans for loss of power or loss of other utilities and services?
7.	Does your hospital have technology (e.g., television, internet, radio) and policies in place to monitor external events such as a wildland fire?
8.	Does your hospital conduct annual fire safety training and education, including fire response and evacuation procedures, in conjunction with local fire service?
9.	<p>Does your hospital have a Communications Plan that includes:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Pre incident standard messages for communicating the risks associated with this threat and recommendations to the public and media? <input type="checkbox"/> Participation in the Joint Information Center? <input type="checkbox"/> Use of social media for communication, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who can use social media? ○ Who approves the use of social media? ○ When is the use of social media not appropriate? <input type="checkbox"/> Procedure for notification of internal and external authorities (local, county, region, and state)? <input type="checkbox"/> A plan to distribute radios, auxiliary phones, and flashlights to appropriate people and areas? <input type="checkbox"/> A plan for rapid communication of weather status (watch, warning)? <input type="checkbox"/> A plan for communication of status to local emergency management and other area hospitals?
10.	Does your hospital have a plan to regularly monitor vital service delivery gauges (e.g., boiler temperature, oxygen levels, etc.)?
11.	<p>Does your hospital provide home healthcare services? If so:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Are home healthcare patients and caregivers provided with education on where to get timely information in the event of a wildland fire, including when and how to evacuate if at risk? <input type="checkbox"/> Are patient locations identified and mapped? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there policies and procedures to notify patients who may be in the path of a wildland fire? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there a policy for bringing patients to the hospital? <input type="checkbox"/> Does home health care assess patients for acuity and prioritize for evaluation pre- and post-incident?

	<input type="checkbox"/> Does your hospital have policies and procedures to assist, if possible, with medical supplies (oxygen, prescriptions, supplies, etc.) for home healthcare patients who have to evacuate and would not have continued access to services?
12.	Does your hospital engage in local or regional activities to track evacuated patients (including home healthcare patients)?
13.	Does your hospital have a plan for alternate care sites including set up, equipment, staffing, and signage?
14.	Does your hospital have a plan to protect or recover lost data or damaged documents?
15.	Does your hospital provide training for staff in their roles and responsibilities due to the threat of an impending wildland fire?
16.	Does your hospital identify and have agreements with contractors that can perform repairs after the fire?
17.	Does your hospital have procedures in place to limit entry to and exit from the hospital, to decrease exposure to heat, ash, or smoke?
Immediate and Intermediate Response	
1.	Does your hospital have criteria to initiate, and the capability to, shut down air intakes to prevent smoke from entering the hospital?
2.	Does your hospital have criteria and a rapid decision making process to determine the need to activate the Wildland Fire Plan?
3.	Does your hospital train all staff in evacuation policies, procedures, and operations, including use of evacuation assist devices, prioritization of patient movement, safe patient handling, staging sites post-evacuation, and identified routes of egress?
4.	Does your hospital have multiple methods and equipment for evacuating patients (e.g., chairs, stretchers, backboards, sled type devices, blanket drag, single person carry, multiple person carry)?
5.	Does your hospital have evacuation equipment for bariatric and functional access needs patients?
6.	Does your hospital have an evacuation policy for non-patient care areas that includes the movement of data and equipment if in harm's way?
7.	Does your hospital's Evacuation Plan include notification of family members when patients are relocated to other facilities?
8.	Does your hospital assess the need and plan for sheltering staff and families? Does the plan include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provisions for dependent elders, children, and pets? <input type="checkbox"/> Location of rest and hygiene facilities for staff, visitors, and families? <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient supplies for hygiene, food and water, sleeping, and recreation? <input type="checkbox"/> Food and water for pets? <input type="checkbox"/> Policy for pet sheltering that addresses identification, vaccines, medicines, bedding, and litter? <input type="checkbox"/> Orientation to the site including safety and security, hours of operations, and feeding options?

9.	Does your hospital have policy and procedure that addresses the securing or movement of hazardous materials if the hospital is evacuated due to a wildland fire?
10.	Does your hospital have a process to provide accurate and continuous incident documentation, computerized or manual, including: <input type="checkbox"/> Patient care? <input type="checkbox"/> Incident management (Incident Action Plan, Hospital Incident Command System forms, etc.)? <input type="checkbox"/> Incident related expenses?
Extended Response and System Recovery	
1.	Does your hospital identify and train staff to continually monitor: <input type="checkbox"/> Weather conditions? <input type="checkbox"/> Directions from public safety officials? <input type="checkbox"/> Other intelligence sources to maintain current situational awareness of the event?
2.	Does your hospital identify and train staff to monitor the environmental climate for increases in heat, failures in operation due to shutdown of air intake, and adverse effects due to smoke?
3.	Does your hospital have adequate space for rest and hygiene for staff and family members who may be required to remain in the hospital due to external health hazards?
4.	Does your hospital have a procedure to inventory equipment, supplies, medications, and blood supply?
5.	Does your hospital have procedures to: <input type="checkbox"/> Perform damage assessment (interior and exterior)? <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate infrastructure operational needs? <input type="checkbox"/> Initiate a repair plan or contract for needed repair assistance? <input type="checkbox"/> Reevaluate need for evacuation, partial or complete?
6.	Does your hospital have procedures to provide regular situation updates and safety recommendations to patients, staff, and families?
7.	Does your hospital have procedures to ensure all necessary equipment is usable and safety checked and that equipment and supplies are reordered, repaired, and replaced as warranted?
8.	Does your hospital have procedures to debrief patients, staff, and community partners?
9.	Does your hospital have policies and procedures for the repatriation of patients following an evacuation?
10.	Does your hospital have plans for restoration of critical infrastructure (e.g., electrical, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, vacuum systems, etc.)?
11.	Does your hospital have a continuing process to capture all costs and expenditures related to operations?
12.	Does your hospital have a process for submitting costs for disaster reimbursement from insurance carriers, as well as local, state, and Federal Emergency Management Agency disaster relief?

13.	Does your hospital have Hospital Incident Management Team position depth to support extended operations?
14.	Does your hospital have procedures to collect and collate incident documentation and formulate an After Action Report and Corrective Action and Improvement Plan?
15.	Does your hospital have procedures for reporting and documenting staff injuries?
16.	Does your hospital have a policy and procedure to address line of duty death?