

Franklin-Williamson Respiratory Support/Power Outage Community Protocol

A part of the Franklin and Williamson Counties' (Illinois) Emergency Operation Plans

B. Home Medical Equipment Companies (HMECs)

Scope of Responsibility:

- HMECs are responsible for the case management of their clients, including the provision of supplies to clients in power disruptions or outages, or other emergencies.
- HMECs are responsible for having a business emergency plan in place overiewing how medical equipment resources are secured and client case management is sustained during disasters/emergencies.
- HMECs shall provide important business emergency contact information to clients. Clients are to be informed that their primary and first emergency points of contact is their HMEC. It's highly recommended for HMECs to use the "BREATHE" resources and the Decision-Making/Communication Flowchart during power disruptions/outages.
- After following the procedures for seeking/identifying critical available resources, outlined in the HMEC's emergency plan, if a critical need still exists, HMECs may reach out to their local emergency management agency. Contact County/City EMAs for assistance on: 1) matters of client life-safety or significant health impact, 2) clearing of road debris to reach clients' homes, 3) accessing disaster/emergency situational awareness information, e.g., location of ARC shelters and/or cellphone/laptop computer charging centers, timeframe for restoration of electricity, etc.
 - NOTE: County/City EMAs do not typically have local or even state caches of medical equipment and/or supplies, so the best plan is to have multiple contingencies in acquiring resources for clients during/after disasters/emergencies. Critical resource requests submitted to EMAs for prioritized individuals will need to be submitted ASAP, after looking at internal and external resource suppliers outlined in the HMEC emergency plan. Early identification of anticipated critical gap resources not met by the process laid out in the emergency plan needs to be done quickly in order to give EMA adequate time to request and secure potential resources.

- HMECs shall educate clients on preparedness activities and response actions and explore and discuss options of various alternate power sources to clients, ideally providing cost estimates after insurance and payment plan options for clients
- HMECs shall work with EMAs and other community emergency responders to share important information and in planning activities that are intended to mitigate negative outcomes for individuals who rely on power-operated medical equipment.

Preparedness Actions:

- Review and update the HMEC's emergency plan, ensuring that equipment resupply and client case management are sustained during a power disruption/outage or other emergency. Here are some critical planning elements to be included in a HMEC emergency plan:
 - HMECs are **strongly encouraged** to invest in a back-up generator/ back-up power sources to assist in maintaining continuity of business operations during power outages.
 - The process of establishing alternate modes of communication so communication with clients and EMAs can be maintained if traditional communication modes are unavailable.
 - Outline the HMECs resource and client case management assistance process, including internal (Corporate office, other HMEC branches) and external resources/assistance (other non-affiliated HMECs), if available. It is recommended that HMECs plan with other local and out-of-area other non-affiliated HMECs and establish mutually-beneficial Memorandums of Understanding/Agreement (MOUs/MOAs). HMECs may contact their County EMA to assist in life-saving resource securement after all options outlined in the HMEC emergency plan have been sought.
- Train all staff on the HMEC emergency plan.
- Assess all clients to determine the level of vulnerability/risk. Clients who are most vulnerable/at risk, should be prioritized for resources, supplies and case management. If, after following their emergency plan and exhausting all resources, the HMEC may contact the County EMA for assistance. County assistance for individuals should typically be requested for those assessed as most vulnerable/at risk.
- **Review the BREATHE handout. Most of the action steps outlined below are from the BREATHE handout and/or magnet. Encourage clients to complete the BREATHE Easier in Emergencies**

preparedness magnet and to place it on refrigerator or other visible location for future reference.

- Ensure that all clients know that the HMEC is their point of contact in all disasters/emergencies contact and case manager. HMEC emergency contact numbers are to be shared with all clients, including business after-hours contact numbers, business out-of-area contact numbers, and business cell phone numbers that clients can use to send and receive texts.
- Educate clients on how to maintain operation of any power-operated medical equipment during a power disruption or outage. Provide clients with the “BREATHE Easier in Emergencies” materials and information on alternate power sources. If possible, review costs before and after insurance coverage and offer payment plans on HMEC alternate power sources, if possible.
- Encourage clients to identify at least two local support contacts and at least two out-of-area contacts, preferably with back-up power generators, installed by a certified Electrician.
- HMECs shall encourage clients to look into their electricity utility provider’s priority restoration program and sign-up for it, if eligible, whenever possible.
- Encourage clients to compile essential emergency supplies for at least 3-days, although a 7 to 14-day supply would be ideal, check out the FEMA website about preparedness kits: <http://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit>. Included in this kit should be any critical medical equipment/supplies, medication, etc. Clients could potentially store compact alternate power sources, e.g., battery back-up, in this emergency preparedness kit.
- Educate clients that other potential supports may possibly be available to assist people who rely on power-operated medical equipment , but are not the clients’ best options, are limited in availability, may be costly, and out of their personal planning process (and therefore are not guaranteed to be available). Options include such as:
 - Placement for certain vulnerable/at-risk individuals may be possible at certain residential living facilities. Clients need to know, however, that this is a limited option and is based on the HMECs client prioritization assessment, the availability and eligibility criteria at potential facilities. There will probably be a charge assessed by the admitting facility, which may be rather costly, so individuals are encouraged to seek personal local and out-of-area supports networks.

- Clients may consider staying at a hotel that has back-up generator power, but note that this option is limited, since these hotels will quickly be filled by emergency responders coming into the area to assist and by area residents. **NOTE: It is rare when the ARC Disaster Services team will make a decision to place a client in a hotel due to medical reasons.** ARC, however, does seek to make accommodation for anyone in need, within reason.
- There is a possibility that an ARC shelter may open that could assist individuals who rely on power-operated medical equipment, but individuals with power-operated medical equipment should not make this their priority option in their personal emergency plan. **NOTE: ARC cots are not comfortable, so even if a shelter opens, please be aware that it will probably be done so on a temporary basis. NOTE: Clients need to exhaust all personal emergency plans first before checking in with their HMEC to explore all possible options before showing up at a shelter.**
- Only as a last resort, in extreme emergencies, should an individual who relies on power-operated medical equipment consider going to a local hospital. Not all hospitals are able to accommodate the needs of people who rely on power-operated medical equipment in a hospital setting. **NOTE: Hospital bed availability during disasters/emergencies quickly becomes limited or unavailable. Consequently, clients should not depend on this being their emergency plan.**

Response:

Reminder: The best way to mitigate issues that could arise in power disruptions/outages is to motivate clients to act on the preparedness activities outlined in the BREATHE Easier in Emergencies public education campaign.

- During and after an emergency or disaster situation that causes electrical power disruption or outage, HMECs should be ready to inform and assist clients and be their clients' representative with EMAs and other community responders. HMECs should monitor local news media reports on affected areas and anticipated length of service disruption/outage.
- In power disruptions and/or outages, clients who rely on power-operated medical equipment should first utilize the alternate power sources they pre-identified and secured for themselves.

- If clients are unable to sustain operation of power-operated medical equipment with alternate power sources, determine if electrical service is just disrupted on a short-term basis or if it's a more extended power outage.
- If a disruption, determine if clients can manage without a few hours of electricity. If the answer is no, clients need to reach out to the local support contacts to seek assistance. If this has been done and the need is critical, clients should contact the HMEC provider to seek assistance.
- If a power outage, clients should reach out to local supports first. If local supports are unable to assist the individual, clients should then explore the option of staying with out-of-area support contacts. If clients decide to stay with their out-of-area support contacts, the HMEC provider should be notified of the relocation. If staying with an out-of-area support contact is not a viable option, clients are to contact the HMEC provider. The HMEC provider, if needed, will contact the County /City EMA.
- When contacting County/City EMA for assistance with specific clients, be ready to share the client's priority level.