

Hurricane Season Planning for Veterinary Hospitals

Hurricane season is here. This is the time to decide what you plan to do if a hurricane threatens to strike your area.

Decide if you will stay open or close the hospital. Here are some helpful tips:

IF YOU CLOSE:

- 1) Decide when you will close the hospital in order to evacuate all patients and boarders.
- 2) Decide when and where patients requiring continued care will be transferred and by whom.
- 3) Have literature for clients at to where they may safely shelter their pets during a hurricane, and what they need to bring with their pet to the shelter.
- 4) Decide when staff will be free to leave the practice to prepare their homes and take care of their personal needs.
- 5) Decide how you will contact the staff when you plan to reopen and when they are expected to return to work (phone tree).
- 6) Communications: a hard wired phone and cellular phone may work when there is no power for your phone system. Have a phone tree for staff to communicate.
- 7) Write out a hurricane pay policy (for days they are unable to work), in advance, for doctors and staff. This way there are no misunderstandings or hard feelings.
- 8) Take your computer disc back up and store it off-site in a fireproof and water proof place.
- 9) Take your appointment book, hospital manuals, tax returns etc.
- 10) Protect your building with hurricane shutters
- 11) Supplies:
 - a. Buy bottled water. Fill garbage cans, tubs and sinks and add 8 drops of bleach/gallon.
 - b. Batteries
 - c. Flashlights and lanterns
 - d. Matches
 - e. Tools, rope, etc
 - f. Disposable plates and bowls
 - g. Trash bags
 - h. Cash
 - i. Fuel

- 12) Be sure you secure you hospital against theft and looting.
- 13) Walk the property and bring inside all loose items.
- 14) Turn off and unplug expensive equipment, appliances and computers.
- 15) Turn off all oxygen
- 16) Consider alternate sources of electrical power (generators) to operate after the storm passes. Make sure you have fuel for them.
- 17) Make sure you are properly insured. Have pictures of your facility before and after the storm.
- 18) Make sure roof drains are clear so water cannot accumulate.
- 19) Secure and lock outside dumpster
- 20) Fill coolers with ice to store refrigerated inventory.
- 21) Have deceased animals picked up from your freezer before the storm
- 22) Keep lists of suppliers, staff, and other critical phone numbers (repair personnel, VMA, AVMA)

- 23) Keep a list of on-site hazardous materials

IF YOU STAY OPEN: (FOR IN-HOSPITAL PATIENTS AND BOARDERS & EMERGENCIES)

- 1) Make sure the building is built strong enough to endure the most violent hurricane.
- 2) Protect your building with hurricane shutters
- 3) Make certain that you can adequately staff the practice. Remember, parents who have children who attend schools that are closed will probably be unavailable. Staff who can work will probably have to sleep in the hospital while you ride out the storm. Allow essential staff to bring their personal pets in for housing.
- 4) Decide when non-essential staff will be free to leave to prepare their homes and take care of their personal needs.
- 5) Decide how you will contact the non-essential staff when you plan to reopen and when they are expected to return to work (phone tree) and relieve those who worked during the storm.
- 6) Write out a hurricane pay policy, in advance, for doctors and staff. This way there are no misunderstandings or hard feelings.
- 7) Have a generator with enough fuel for two weeks that powers critical lighting, air-conditioning, fans, and necessary equipment that cannot be battery operated.
- 8) Have adequate supplied of food and water (for staff and patients) for at least one week. Have a non-electric can opener and emergency cooking facilities (grill and charcoal).
- 9) Supplies
 - a. Buy water plus fill garbage cans and add 8 drops of bleach/gallon
 - b. Batteries
 - c. Flashlights and Lanterns
 - d. Matches
 - e. Tools, rope
 - f. Disposable plates and bowls
 - g. Trash bags

h. Fuel

- 10) Cash
- 11) Fill coolers with ice as a back up to refrigerators and freezers.
- 12) Have deceased animals picked up from your freezer before the storm.
- 13) Turn off and unplug non-essential expensive equipment and computers during the actual storm period
- 14) Turn off all oxygen tanks that are not in use for critical patients
- 15) Consider buying a large pellets of grass for inside walking of dogs until it safe to do so outside
- 16) Walk the property & bring inside all loose items
- 17) Secure and lock outside dumpster
- 18) Make sure roof drains are clear so water cannot accumulate
- 19) Make sure you are properly insured. Have pictures of your facility before and after the storm.
- 20) Keep handy lists of suppliers, staff and other critical phone numbers
- 21) Keep a list of on site hazardous materials
- 22) Have instructions for staff and owners on housing requirements for boarders
- 23) Define a time that you will no longer accept boarders for admissions and when you will lock down the facility until the storm passes.
- 24) Make sure every patient has an ID around its neck.
- 25) Have a plan for when owners may pick up their pets after the storm
- 26) Staff should have high rubber boots in case of flooding
- 27) Have a safety plan for when staff and patients may safely exit the building after the storm.

Thank you to Dr.Lloyd Meisels for these hurricane planning tips.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS PLEASE CONTACT THE SOUTH FLORIDA VETERINARY DISASTER RELIEF COMMITTEE- SPEAK WITH DR FERNANDES: 305-557-0531