

TITLE
SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROCEDURE

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INITIAL APPROVAL DATE
January 6, 2012

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Emergency/Disaster Management

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October 31, 2012

CATEGORY
EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROCEDURE

NEXT REVIEW
OCTOBER 31, 2014

If you have any questions or comments regarding the information in this protocol, please contact Emergency/Disaster Management at emergencydisaster.management@albertahealthservices.ca.

PURPOSE

The Severe Weather Response Procedure details the actions to be taken by staff and physicians to ensure the safety of themselves, their patients and visitors in the event of severe weather.

APPLICABILITY

The Severe Weather Response Procedure applies to all personnel.

ACTIVATION

The Severe Weather Response Procedure can be initiated by any member of staff or physician by following the algorithm at **Appendix 1**. The order in which notification occurs will depend on the degree of danger and the particular circumstances of the situation. Severe weather-specific responses are at **Appendices 2 - 7**.

POST INCIDENT ACTIONS

For a facility impacted by a severe weather event, the manager in charge is to:

- Assess for injuries and facility damage.
- Implement subsequent emergency response plans as appropriate.
- Complete incident documentation as follows:
 - Reportable Incident Form (seniors' sites).
 - Urgent Notification of an Emerging Issue (all other sites).
 - Other site or zone-specific documentation as appropriate.

Advice on document completion may be sought from zone Emergency/Disaster Management staff or from the Local Administrator On-call (evenings and weekends). Zone Emergency/Disaster Management staff may also be contacted for assistance in facilitating the post incident debriefing.

DEFINITIONS

Designated Shelter Area - A below grade or internal room or hallway without windows designated as a shelter area during a tornado warning.

Warning - Issued when an identifiable severe weather event is imminent or is already confirmed as occurring. The lead time will rarely exceed 10 minutes.

Watch - Issued when conditions are favourable for the development of an identifiable severe weather event although there is still considerable forecast uncertainty. The lead time will rarely exceed 3 hours.

Lead Time - The period of time between the issuance of a severe weather bulletin for an area and the onset of the described weather conditions.

Severe Thunderstorm - Issued when one or more of the following occurs: wind gusts ≥ 90 km/h; hail ≥ 2 centimetres in diameter; rainfall ≥ 50 mm within 1 hour

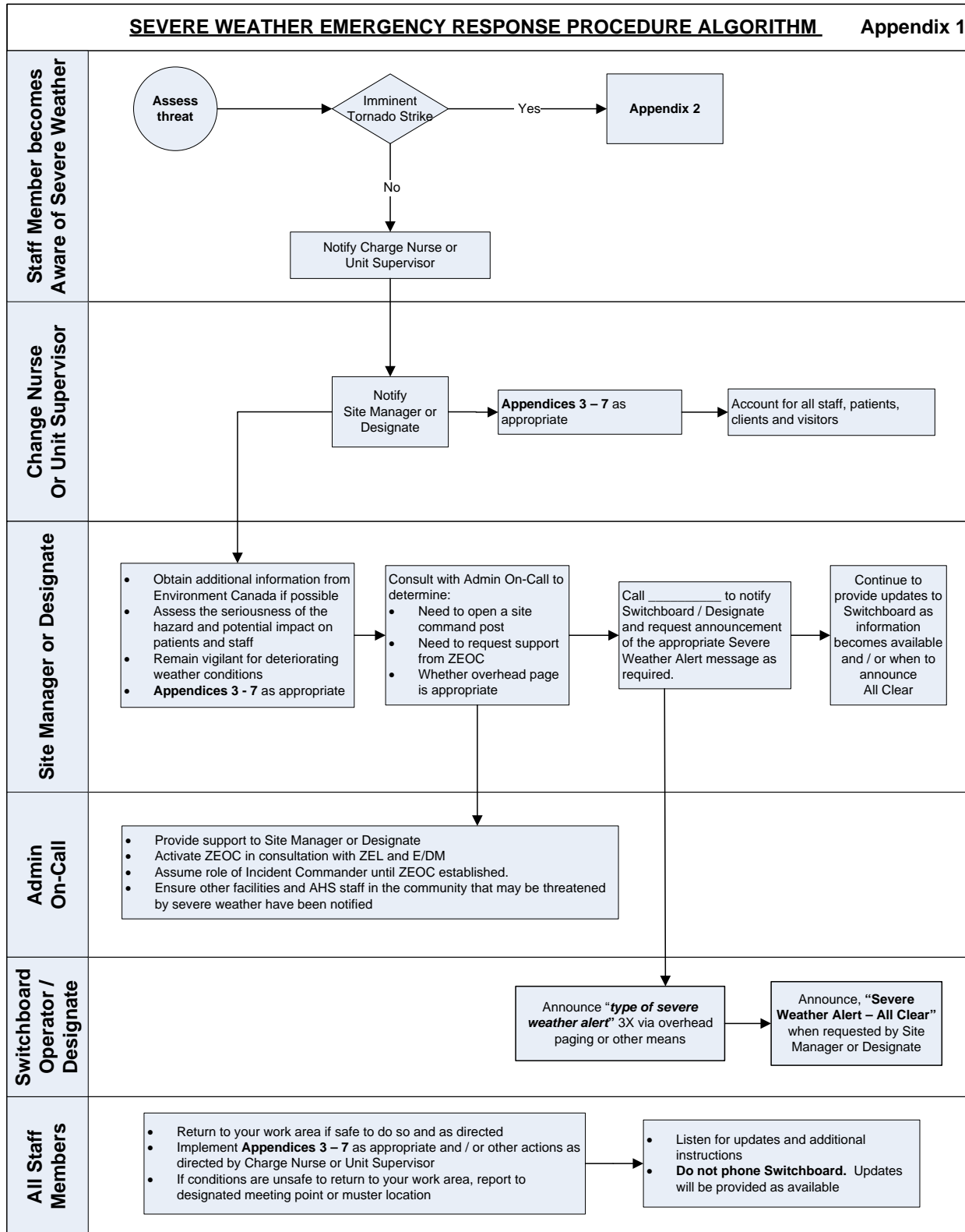
Severe Wind - Issued when sustained wind speeds ≥ 70 km/h and/or wind gusts ≥ 90 km/h (≥ 80 km/h and/or ≥ 100 km/h for western part of South Zone including Lethbridge)

Severe Wind Chill - Issued when winds ≥ 15 km/h lasting ≥ 3 hours will give a wind chill ≤ -40 C

Extreme Heat – To be defined. A provincial working group led by the Chief MOH is currently studying this issue.

SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROCEDURE ALGORITHM

Appendix 1



Appendix 2

TORNADO WITHOUT PRIOR WARNING

- Shout warning to patients, visitors and other staff in immediate vicinity to alert them to imminent tornado.
- **GET IN**
 - If outside, get inside a sturdy building.
 - If unable to get inside, lie flat in a ditch or hollow and cover your head.
 - If driving, do not try to outrun the tornado; exit the vehicle and lie flat in a ditch or hollow away from your vehicle (to reduce the chance of the car rolling on you) and cover your head.
- **GET DOWN**
 - If inside, get into a basement or inner hallway or room.
 - To the lowest floor in a multi-story building.
 - On the floor, preferably under solid furniture.
- **GET COVERED**
 - With pillows, blankets or mattresses to protect yourself from flying debris. Cover your head with your arms if nothing else is available.

Appendix 3

TORNADO WARNING

- Assess threat. (A warning generally covers a large geographical area.)
 - Watch for black skies, intense wind with swirling debris.
 - Hail or heavy rain, followed by dead calm or intense wind shift.
- Move ambulatory patients, residents, visitors and staff to the designated Shelter Area
 - Take weather radio and phone.
 - Take essential medical equipment and charts if time permits.
- For all others, move them to an inner, windowless room or hallway.
 - Provide chairs or soft materials to sit on.
 - Close patient room doors and fire doors.
- For patients who cannot be removed from their rooms:
 - Lower the bed as far as possible.
 - Move them as far away from windows and skylights as possible.
 - Cover them with blankets and pillows to protect them from flying debris.
 - Draw curtains and drapes.
- Listen to the weather radio and other media for weather updates.

Appendix 4

TORNADO WATCH

- Ensure weather radio is functioning.
- Tune in to local radio/television station (be aware that satellite stations may not carry local weather warnings).
- Monitor Environment Canada's weather warning webpage at http://www.weatheroffice.gc.ca/warnings/warnings_e.html
- Frequently observe weather conditions.

Appendix 5

SEVERE THUNDERSTORM / WIND

- Bring patients indoors and have them remain there until the severe weather passes (30 minutes following the last report of thunder).
- Close and secure all windows.
- Discourage visitors from leaving buildings until severe weather has passed.
- Advise patients, residents, staff and visitors to stay away from windows, skylights and exterior walls. Avoid rooms with large windows.
- Occupants of buildings that offer little severe weather protection (portable or manufactured steel buildings) should evacuate immediately to a nearby, well constructed building if this can be accomplished safely. If severe weather is already in progress follow '**Tornado Without Prior Warning**' actions as appropriate.
- If time and safety permit, ensure that objects that may become airborne missiles in high winds are safely secured or brought inside. Do not send staff out into storm conditions to secure objects.
- If you must exit the building, use a door on the leeward side or in a sheltered area. Maintain a tight grip on the door and ensure that it latches behind you.

Appendix 6

SEVERE WIND CHILL

- Identify those clients, staff and visitors most at risk from severe cold-related injury including:
 - The elderly.
 - Those with peripheral circulatory compromise (eg. diabetes).
 - Those with cognitive impairments or under the influence of drugs/alcohol.
 - Outdoor workers.
- Stay inside or carefully limit time spent out of doors.
- If required to be out of doors, dress appropriately for the conditions.
- When travelling:
 - Ensure that necessary emergency supplies are carried (emergency car kit checklist available at <http://www.getprepared.gc.ca/knw/kt/auto-eng.aspx>)
 - Carry a fully-charged cell phone.
 - Advise supervisor or contact of your route of travel and ETA.

Appendix 7

EXTREME HEAT

Provincial working group led by Chief MOH currently studying this issue. Actions to be completed once working group has concluded its task.