

APPENDIX EE

**Snow and Travel Interruption Plan 2013/14**

- I. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this memorandum is to issue the policy, procedures, and responsibilities of all staff in the event of a disaster that impacts the ability of staff to report to work. While the focus of this plan is primarily winter weather, the same procedures will be applied to all situations that impact the Medical Center's staffing capability. Specifically:
- a. Define the role of the VAMC in a community-wide significant impact event.
  - b. Develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) that address significant winter weather events.
  - c. Develop snow and travel interruption procedures.
  - d. Assign roles and responsibilities of Operating Unit Managers and Key Operators/Managers.
  - e. Ensure that all employees have received appropriate training.
  - f. Conduct an annual evaluation of the effectiveness of the plan.
- II. **SCOPE:** The Emergency Preparedness Coordinator (EPC) is responsible for the development of the snow and travel interruption plan. The Emergency Management Committee (EMC) has the responsibility to ensure the overall preparation, implementation, evaluation, and currency of the plan. The EMC is responsible for providing facility-wide oversight of the plan to assure the quality, appropriateness and timeliness of services, to assure comparability and uniformity in operations, and to continually identify opportunities to improve services to add value to stakeholders. All staff is required to be familiar with the provisions of this plan.
- III. **POLICY:** This plan establishes basic responsibilities and procedures for response to an emergency that adversely impacts staff's ability to travel to/from work and may affect the facility, the occupants of the facility or the ability to maintain quality patient care.

It is recognized that an emergency is an unusual event that requires us to conduct operations in compliance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Normal reporting channels are suspended when the Incident Command Team is activated.

The overriding job of each VAMC staff is to care for our veterans. Along with this privilege comes a great deal of responsibility. Unlike most Federal Agencies, we cannot conduct our primary mission remotely. While the safety and well being of every staff member is paramount, it is expected that staff will make every effort to report to duty on time. Staff is reminded that in an emergency they may be assigned to direct patient care or support duties that are outside of their normal position description.

**IV. ACRONYMS:**

- A. SOP – Standard Operating Procedures
- B. COOP – Continuity of Operations Plan
- C. WWP – Winter Weather Plan
- D. EMC – Emergency Management Committee
- E. EPC – Emergency Preparedness Coordinator
- F. ICS – Incident Command System
- G. ICT – Incident Command Team
- H. CP – Command Post
- I. IC – Incident Commander
- J. HSPD – Homeland Security Presidential Directive

**V. DEFINITIONS:**

- A. **Winter Storm Warning:** Winter Storm Warnings are usually issued 12 to 24 hours before the event is expected to begin.
- B. **Winter Storm Watch:** Alerts the public to the possibility of a blizzard, heavy snow, heavy freezing rain, or heavy sleet. Winter Storm Watches are usually issued 12 to 48 hours before the beginning of a Winter Storm.
- C. **Winter Storm Outlook:** Issued prior to a Winter Storm Watch. The Outlook is given when forecasters believe winter storm conditions are possible and are usually issued 3 to 5 days in advance of a winter storm.
- D. **Blizzard Warning:** Issued for sustained or gusty winds of 35 mph or more, and falling or blowing snow creating visibilities at or below ¼ mile; these conditions should persist for at least three hours.
- E. **Wind Chill Warning:** Issued when wind chill temperatures are expected to be hazardous to life within several minutes of exposure.

- F. **Wind Chill Advisory:** Issued when wind chill temperatures are expected to be a significant inconvenience to life with prolonged exposure, and, if caution is not exercised, could lead to hazardous exposure.
- G. **Winter Weather Advisories:** Issued for accumulations of snow, freezing rain, freezing drizzle, and sleet which will cause significant inconveniences and, if caution is not exercised, could lead to life-threatening situations.
- H. **Dense Fog Advisory:** Issued when fog will reduce visibility to  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile or less over a widespread area.
- I. **Snow Flurries:** Light snow falling for short durations. No accumulation or light dusting is all that is expected.
- J. **Snow Showers:** Snow falling at varying intensities for brief periods of time. Some accumulation is possible.
- K. **Snow Squalls:** Brief, intense snow showers accompanied by strong, gusty winds. Accumulation may be significant. Snow squalls are best known in the Great Lakes region.
- L. **Blowing Snow:** Wind-driven snow that reduces visibility and causes significant drifting. Blowing snow may be snow that is falling and/or loose snow on the ground picked up by the wind.
- M. **Sleet:** Rain drops that freeze into ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet usually bounces when hitting a surface and does not stick to objects. However, it can accumulate like snow and cause a hazard to motorists.
- N. **Freezing Rain:** Rain that falls onto a surface with a temperature below freezing. This causes it to freeze to surfaces, such as trees, cars, and roads, forming a coating or glaze of ice. Even small accumulations of ice can cause a significant hazard.
- O. **Liberal Leave:** While in Phase III, if a severe condition exists that makes the commute for staff to/from work potentially hazardous, the Incident Commander may announce, via the Public Affairs Officer, that those staff who are unable to make it to work may contact their Supervisor and request unplanned annual leave.
- P. **AA:** During periods of declared emergencies, the Director retains sole authority to issue Administrative Absence authority.
- Q. **Emergency Telework:** The Incident Commander may authorize staff with VA issued laptops or CITRIX approved and installed on their personal electronic device the authority to conduct telework from a location off campus when that option would benefit the mission accomplishment of the facility.

Request for emergency telework must be made from the Supervisor to the Incident Commander via their respective ICS Branch Chief.

**VI. RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- A. Medical Center Director: Overall authority and responsibility for the Medical Center's mission accomplishment. Retains sole authority for authorizing emergency use of Medical Center resources to assist the community.
- B. Associate Medical Center Director: Overall authority for all Medical Center support services.
- C. Chief of Staff: Responsible for determining authorized physician staffing levels during emergency conditions.
- D. AMCD for Nursing Programs and Education: Responsible for determining authorized Nurse staffing levels during emergency.
- E. Service Chiefs: Responsible for training all staff on this policy and reporting completion of training to the EPC by 15 November annually. Responsible for determining minimum staffing requirements to complete service mission essential functions. Responsible for designating, in writing, 2 additional staff members to assume the duties of Acting Service Chief in the event he/she cannot make it into work.
- F. HR Service Chief: Responsible for ensuring all procedures relating to staff is in compliance with all applicable regulations and Union agreements. Responsible for coordinating this program with all Union partners. Manages the labor pool.
- G. FMS Chief: Responsible for the material condition of all roadway and walk ways. Make 1B-114 (Male) and 2A-122C (Female) ready for staff sleeping.
- H. EMS Chief: Provide cots, sheets, blankets, pillows, and towels for staff. Clean sleeping areas frequently.
- I. NFS Chief: Responsible for providing meals for all staff remaining on campus during emergency events. Responsible for delivering meal tickets to the AOD.
- J. Public Affairs Officer: Responsible for all communication with staff, patients, visitors, volunteers, and the general public.
- K. Emergency Preparedness Coordinator: Responsible for developing the snow and travel interruption plan, overseeing the execution of the plan, collecting lessons learned and developing the After Action Report and implementing

- changes due to lessons learned. Brief the Incident Commander every four hours on road conditions.
- L. Emergency Management Committee: Reviews the COOP and makes recommended changes and/or approval to the Quad.
- M. Police Chief: Provide security for the areas of the Medical Center where staff are sleeping and staging when required to remain on campus.
- N. Fire Chief: Deliver cots to 1B-114 and 2A-122C.
- O. Supervisors: Train all staff on the COOP annually between 15 October and 15 November. Report complete to your Service Chief by 15 November annually.
- P. All Staff: Staff is required to be familiar with their duties and responsibilities as detailed in this instruction. Staff under the care of a doctor is responsible for complying with any imposed restrictions.
- Q. AOD: The AOD is responsible for assisting the Incident Commander as directed. If this plan is implemented and the Command Post is not set up, the AOD shall distribute all meal tickets and bedding per this plan.

**VII. Procedures:** The following COOP response phases are available to the Incident Commander:

- A. Phase I (Winter Weather Advisory): It is recommended staff bring personal belongings with them to work. The IC will activate the following portions of the ICT:
- Public Affairs Officer
  - Safety Officer
  - Planning Chief
  - Logistics Chief
- B. Phase II (Winter Storm Warning):
- Incident Commander may activate the Command Post.
  - Supervisors begin making staffing reports to their Service Chief each shift. Service Chiefs report status each shift to their Quadrad member or Command Post at [MWV-ICS@va.gov](mailto:MWV-ICS@va.gov) (if activated).
  - Supervisors begin querying their staff for volunteers to remain on campus in the event of a significant winter weather event.

C. Phase III (Set when the Incident Commander determines travel is affected):

- Incident Commander activates the full ICT and CP.
- Operations Chief assumes all mission sustainability responsibility.
- Service Chiefs report non emergency essential staff that are on campus and available for reassignment to the Labor Pool Supervisor. Those identified staff will continue their normal duties until specifically tasked by the Planning Chief.
- Staff Members who volunteer to remain onboard to work outside their normal duties will be provided meals and Comp time or overtime. Service Chiefs shall report the names of volunteers to the AOD or Command Post.
- Service Chief's will make all staffing requests to the Operations Chief.
- NFS will provide box lunches for staff assigned overnight duties based on numbers provided by the AOD.

D. Personnel Policy during Phase III:

1. Staff members remaining onboard to ensure the continuity of care for our patients shall be required to have 8 consecutive hrs of rest time for every 24 hrs on campus. While compensatory time or overtime will not be paid for the rest period, employees will be provided a sleeping area and meals. The Supervisor shall ensure all staff receives their mandated rest periods.
2. The Incident Commander may authorize liberal leave.
3. The Incident Commander may institute emergency telework.
4. The Incident Commander retains the sole authority to authorize overtime pay.
5. Staff members remaining onboard to ensure the continuity of care for our patients shall be authorized 3 meals a day for the period they are on campus, including periods of normally scheduled tours.
6. Supervisors can obtain meal tickets from the AOD or Command Post (When activated). All meal tickets must be tracked and accounted for by the Supervisor. Any unused tickets must be returned to the AOD when Phase III is secured.
7. The Incident Commander retains the authority to modify these personnel policies as required to meet the Medical Center's mission.
8. Staff members are urged to use caution when traveling on winter roads. We would rather staff arrive late, than drive at unsafe speed on snow/ice covered roads. When Phase Three is set, staff is granted a 60 minute grace period of their tour start time. Arrival beyond the grace period will

require you to submit AL. Staff shall communicate their status with their Supervisor as near to the start time of their normal tour of duty as possible, but not later than 2 hours afterwards.

9. The unique status of CBOC's mission dictates that in the event of a CBOC closure, staff will be placed on AA.

**F.** Closure/Suspension of services during Phase III: The Incident Commander retains the sole authority to close clinics or other services onboard the VAMC Martinsburg Campus and the Community Based Outpatient Clinics.

**G.** Ft Detrick shall close at the direction of the Incident Commander Or base Commanding Officer.

**VIII. REFERENCES:** Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) -5, HPSD-8, National Response Framework, VHA Memo dated 2007, and VHA EPC Guidebook.

**IX. RESCISSION:** 31 December 2014

**X. REVIEW DATE and RESPONSIBILITY:** This policy shall be reviewed and reissued annually by the EMC.

Timothy Cooke  
Acting Medical Center Director