

Ensuring Power Continuity for Critical Healthcare Facilities Underscores Shared Mission of Emergency Managers and Public Health Officials

By Eric Cote, Project Director, Powered for Patients

Powered for Patients is a public-private partnership established to address the critical lessons from Hurricane Sandy and other disasters related to backup power and power restoration for critical healthcare facilities. The initiative also addresses the needs of at-risk citizens dependent on electric-powered medical devices during prolonged power outages.

The work of Powered for Patients underscores the shared mission that emergency managers and public health officials have in helping to safeguard backup power and expedite power restoration for critical healthcare facilities.

When Powered for Patients convened its initial stakeholder meeting in Washington, D.C., last year, the joint effort by emergency managers and public health officials to address the issue of power continuity for critical healthcare facilities was fully evident. IAEM CEO Beth Armstrong took part, along with IAEM members Carmine Centrella, program director for the Connecticut Capitol Region, and Daniel Hahn, plans chief for the Santa Rosa County, Florida Division of Emergency Management. A delegation from the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA), including Florida's Director of Emergency Manage-

ment Bryan Koon and NEMA's Matt Cowles, also took part.

On the public health side of the aisle, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) provided financial support for the meeting and involved a senior leadership team, including Gerrit Bakker, in planning and helping to facilitate the meeting. IAEM's local counterpart in public health, the National Association of County and City Health Officials' (NACCHO) Scott Fisher also actively participated in the planning of the meeting and facilitation of key discussions.

Enabling Stakeholders Involved in Supporting Backup Power

The goal of the day-long meeting was to enable key stakeholders involved in supporting backup power and facilitating power restoration for critical healthcare facilities to better understand the challenges faced by other stakeholders. The meeting also provided a platform for stakeholders to discover opportunities to better safeguard backup power and expedite power restoration through coordinated effort. (A copy of the executive summary of the meeting is available at www.poweredforpatients.org.)

Top Five Priorities

Stakeholder meeting discussion and post-meeting attendee survey responses helped identify the Powered for Patients priorities considered most important going forward. The top five priorities were:

- Understanding and enhancing power restoration and prioritization.

- Enhancing pre-disaster communications and post-disaster coordination between utilities and critical healthcare facilities.

- Enhancing situational awareness of backup power status for critical healthcare facilities for government officials.

- Addressing codes and standards relating to backup power for healthcare facilities.

- Addressing challenges related to fuel shortages following disasters.

Types of Activities to Undertake in Addressing Critical Issues

In addition to providing feedback on the most critical issues Powered for Patients should address, attendees also helped establish priorities for the types of activities Powered for Patients should undertake in addressing critical issues. The highest ranked activities were:

- Serve as a resource-sharing platform through which information and programs from other stakeholders and interested parties, journals and other media sources can be provided.

- Convene stakeholders and other partners to raise awareness of and resolve challenges related to backup power and address power restoration issues.

- Participate in national dialogues on backup power and power restoration issues.

- Identify and disseminate best practices.

- Develop mechanisms, such as a website, for sharing resources and



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tools, including technical methods and information.

Powered for Patients Moving Forward: An Emerging Framework for Success

In assessing the outcome of the stakeholder meeting and analyzing post-meeting survey results, Powered for Patients leaders developed the following suggested work groups to help advance the most important work identified by stakeholders:

- Power Restoration and Prioritization.
- Situational Awareness.
- At Risk Individuals.
- Emerging Technologies & Codes and Standards.
- Disaster Response Challenges (including fuel shortages and access to fuel).

Today, as Powered for Patients advances its action plan, the joint efforts between emergency managers and public health officials are once again front and center.

A Powered for Patients State Stakeholder Engagement Program has been developed that will bring emergency managers and public

health officials in targeted states around the same table for critically important discussions with all stakeholders involved in safeguarding backup power and expediting power restoration for critical healthcare facilities.

The goals of the State Stakeholder Engagement Program include identifying gaps in the protection of backup power for critical healthcare facilities and development of an action plan to close those gaps.

The program also will review the current power restoration process in states. As part of this review, Powered for Patients will assess the degree to which expectations about restoration prioritization between utilities, government officials and healthcare facility leaders are aligned or misaligned.

The State Stakeholder Engagement Program will include development of an action plan to help local stakeholders achieve performance improvements in the protection of backup power, the power restoration process and the provision of support for at-risk citizens dependent on electric-powered medical devices during prolonged power outages. The action plan will include development of a state-specific playbook, detailing protocols for pre-disaster planning and post-disaster

response related to backup power and power restoration for critical healthcare facilities. This playbook will include contact information for key stakeholders and key steps to be taken by stakeholders before, during and after disasters, with timelines on when key steps should be taken and protocols for key actions.

Conclusion

The ultimate goal of these state-focused initiatives is maintaining power for critical healthcare facilities during times of disaster and providing greater protection for citizens dependent on electric-powered medical devices during prolonged power outages. These are outcomes that any emergency manager or public health official would proudly see as important achievements.

Get Involved

State or local emergency managers and public health officials interested in launching a State Stakeholder Engagement Program in their state are encouraged to contact Powered for Patients Project Manager Eric Cote at cote@disastersafetystrategies.com, 202-810-0125. ▲

IAEM Think Tanks

Based on the idea behind FEMA Think Tanks, IAEM has launched a medium to engage our members, promote innovation, and facilitate discussions in the field of emergency management. The webinar recording from the Feb. 18, 2015, IAEM Think Tank inaugural event focusing on the Colorado floods is [now available](#).

Student Council Annual Report and Strategic Plan Online

The 2014 IAEM Student Council Annual Report and 2015-2018 Business & Strategic Plan are now available online on the [council resources page](#), along with other documents of interest to IAEM student members.

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