



Region of Waterloo  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
PARAMEDIC SERVICES

# Contingency Planning Tool for Health Care Providers

Adapted from *Vaccine Storage and Handling Guidelines*, 2012  
Ministry of Health and Long Term Care

## Prior to an Electricity Disruption

**It is important to have a documented and operational contingency plan in the event of an electricity disruption.**

The plan should include:

- Primary and back-up contact personnel to ensure proper storage and handling of vaccines during an electricity disruption
- List of emergency supplies on hand: insulated containers, ice packs, calibrated temperature monitoring device
- At least one alternative storage facility with adequate capacity, where the vaccine can be appropriately stored and monitored if the premise does not have a generator

## During an Electricity Disruption

### ***For short term power outage (up to four hours):***

1. Keep vaccine in the refrigerator with the door closed to maintain an acceptable temperature range for as long as possible. Add ice packs or chilled water bottles depending on the season and as necessary.
  - Record maximum, minimum and current temperature at 30 minute intervals.

*It is important to 'know your vaccine refrigerator' to facilitate a timely response and minimize potential vaccine loss. Factors including: the amount of vaccine in your fridge, the external temperatures, the model, type and age of refrigerator will affect the length of time the vaccines in the unit will be kept between 2-8°C.*

2. Move the vaccines to insulated containers with appropriate packaging material and temperature monitoring devices to maintain the temperature between 2-8°C.
  - Monitor the temperatures inside the insulated container at 30 minute intervals.

*Most insulated containers can maintain the required temperatures for a maximum of 3-4 hours. However, this is subject to the external temperature, the number of times the insulated container is opened and closed, the amount of vaccine that is being stored and the type of packaging material used.*

### ***For long-term power outages (more than 12 hours):***

1. Transfer vaccines to an alternate storage facility unaffected by the power outage or one that is connected to a generator:
  - Record the time, minimum, maximum and current temperature in the insulated container before leaving the office and upon arrival. Record temperatures twice daily once vaccine is at the alternate storage site.

## When the Electricity Supply to the Refrigerator Has Been Restored

Vaccines can be returned to the refrigerator once temperatures have stabilized between 2-8°C. If the vaccines were exposed to temperatures outside 2-8°C at any time, do not use it. Place the vaccine in a stable refrigerator – in a bag marked “do not use” – and contact Public Health immediately for further advice at: **519-575-4400 ext 5505.**

**This document should be posted on or close to the vaccine refrigerator(s)**