



California  
Vaccines for  
Children Program

January 8, 2025

# Vaccine Management and Clinic Readiness During Natural Disasters or a Power Outage

The California Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program's thoughts go out to those affected by ongoing wildfires and other natural disasters. For providers affected by the wildfires in the Los Angeles region, we have temporarily halted vaccine shipments in LA County, including the health jurisdictions of Pasadena and Long Beach. Vaccine shipments for the affected areas will resume once conditions allow. In the meantime, if you need an urgent vaccine order, please reach out to the VFC Program at [myVFCvaccines@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:myVFCvaccines@cdph.ca.gov) or call 877-243-8832.

The following information can help all providers prepare and respond to an emergency or a power outage.

## **RECEIVE NOTIFICATIONS**

If you have not yet registered with your utility company's and county's emergency contact list to receive alerts or notifications, sign up as soon as possible.

## **VACCINE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

To ensure that your clinic is prepared during an emergency or power outage, review your [Vaccine Management Plan](#) with your staff and update information if necessary. It is a VFC requirement that your staff review and update the plan at least annually, and that regular vaccine transport drills are conducted to maintain competency and readiness for emergencies ([VFC Provider Agreement Addendum 2A and 3F](#)).

## **RESPOND**

Depending on the emergency, prepare to respond accordingly. However, you should never risk your own safety, or that of your staff, to transport vaccines during an emergency. Only relocate your vaccines if safe to do so. Staff safety comes first.

## **ALTERNATE VACCINE STORAGE LOCATION**

Your Vaccine Management Plan should include an alternate location to temporarily store your vaccines during an emergency. The alternate location must have storage units and temperature monitoring devices that meet [VFC Program Requirements](#). You may want to consider places with a back-up generator (e.g., hospitals, retail pharmacies, large healthcare providers with generator power). Keep in mind, if an entire city or county is affected by a natural disaster or is within the same power grid and is out of power, other providers may be seeking to store their vaccines at the same location.

## **VACCINE STORAGE UNITS & TRANSPORT SUPPLIES**

Maintain enough thermal mass in your vaccine storage units to maintain temperatures in the event of a loss of power. You can achieve sufficient thermal mass by adding water bottles to your refrigerator (including pharmaceutical or laboratory grade units) and ice packs to your freezer. Refer to the [Refrigerator Setup](#) and [Freezer Setup](#) job aids for more information.

Before an emergency, check to make sure that you have the proper supplies and materials needed (hard-sided cooler, cold packs or frozen water bottles, insulating cushioning material, data logger) for vaccine transport. VFC's Vaccine Management Plan template has a useful checklist to help you prepare for planned or unexpected situations.

## **BACK-UP POWER SOURCES**

Although not required, VFC sites in high fire danger areas or experiencing frequent Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) incidents may want to consider:

1. Utilizing vaccine storage equipment that can maintain temperatures for days. Prior to purchasing these types of units, review the detailed specifications to ensure that they meet [VFC Program Requirements](#) for vaccine storage.
2. Having a back-up source of power, such as a battery power system or commercial generator. Prior to purchasing, consider your clinic's power and installation needs. For generators, clinics should ensure they are ready to safely operate.
3. Having qualified pack-out containers or vaccine carriers for vaccine transport. These types of units maintain temperatures for multiple days utilizing phase-change material technology.

## **OTHER SITUATIONS**

Not all emergencies require that you move and transport vaccines to an alternate location. Monitor temperatures to determine any actions needed. Follow the appropriate action based on your emergency situation:

- **In the event of appliance failure:**  
Place vaccines in any VFC-approved backup storage unit with a VFC-compliant data logger, or transport vaccines to the designated alternate storage facility.  
(Refer to “[Transporting Vaccines](#)” in the VFC Provider Operations Manual)
- **For power outages after hours:**  
Report any excursion in your [myCAvax](#) account the next morning and take appropriate action.
- **For planned outages expected to be short-term (approximately fewer than 4 hours):**  
Monitor storage unit temperature and report any excursions once power has been restored.
- **For planned/unplanned outages expected to be longer than approximately 4 hours, or for any outage that extends beyond the current business day:**  
Transport vaccines to the designated alternate storage facility.  
  
If transport or relocation is not feasible (e.g., alternate location is not available or travel conditions are unsafe), keep vaccine storage units closed and notify the VFC Call Center as soon as possible.

If vaccines are not transported properly, you may risk spoiling the vaccines, thus making them non-usable. If vaccine transport is indicated, feasible, and safe, follow the [Transporting Refrigerated Vaccine](#) and [Transporting Frozen Vaccine](#) job aids for detailed information, and document the vaccine and temperature information on the [Vaccine Transport Log](#). Utilize your back-up data logger(s) to monitor temperatures during transport.

## **RESTORE**

Once the emergency is over and power is restored, transport the vaccines back to your clinic following the same guidelines for refrigerated and frozen vaccine transport. Review the vaccine storage unit temperature of the alternate location and temperatures during transport by downloading the data logger reports. If vaccines remained at the clinic and were not transported to an alternate site, download and review the data logger reports.

If the vaccines were exposed to any out-of-range temperatures during storage or transport, report the incident in your [myCAvax](#) account, and follow instructions given by the system.

## **QUESTIONS?**

If you have any questions, please contact your VFC Field Representative, or call the VFC Program at 877-243-8832 (877-2GET-VFC).

**Thank you,**



California Vaccines  
for Children Program

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