

PROCEDURE TO RECEIVE APPROVAL TO RE-OPEN A HOSPITAL FOLLOWING A FULL OR PARTIAL EVACUATION DURING A DISASTER

The approval to re-open a hospital following an evacuation will be made through the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) Division of Health Facilities Construction (DHFC).

Regulation 61-16 (Minimum Standards for Licensing Hospitals and Institutional General Infirmaries), hospitals may not re-open following a closure until DHEC has inspected and approved the facility.

The considerations to re-open a hospital after it has been evacuated during a disaster are that the facility has experienced some level of damage and that the facility has fully or partially evacuated the building(s).

DHEC will work as rapidly as possible to fulfill requests to re-open a facility. During recovery from a disaster, it is critical that healthcare services are available to residents of the affected area(s).

PROCEDURE

Verify with your local county emergency manager that roads are passable and hospital staff is able to return to the facility. Follow county procedures for receiving approval to re-enter the area.

A hospital will not be allowed to re-open if roads are inaccessible to emergency vehicles or if the hospital is unable to communicate with other medical facilities and emergency services.

Immediately after being able to access the hospital following the disaster and subsequent evacuation:

1. Conduct an initial inspection and assessment of the damage.
 - The damage assessment may be conducted by the hospital administration, hospital engineer or private, licensed engineering or contracting consultants.
2. If hospital administration believes that the hospital is capable of re-opening and providing medical care, then:
 - Notify DHEC of the request to re-open. By phone call, contact Terry English, Division Director of the Bureau of Health Facilities Licensing, 803-545-4458 office, 803-730-6162 cell.
 - If Mr. English is unavailable, contact Gwen Thompson, Health Regulation, 803-545-4670 office, 803-807-0435, cell.
 - If neither is available, contact Randy Langston, Office of Public Health Preparedness, 803-898-1252 office, 803-465-0231, cell.
3. Following notification of DHEC by phone, submit written documentation by email or fax to William B. McCallum, Division of Health Facilities Construction, fax 803-545-4989, email mccallub@dhec.sc.gov.

- Include the results of your initial inspection, assessment of damage, and current operating status of the systems listed below:
 - Water pressure to fire sprinkler system
 - Backflow protection systems
 - Availability of potable water
 - Status of emergency generators, HVAC and/or public utility systems
 - Status and type of communication systems
 - Status of areas that may have been flooded, including mechanical rooms, patient floors, elevator shafts
 - Waste management availability
 - Equipment status
 - Roof, windows and door status
 - Debris situation
 - Availability of security
4. When the above information is received by the DHFC, an inspection team will be dispatched to the hospital to perform an inspection. The inspection team will be enroute within 24 hours, pending approval from the county emergency manager to enter the disaster area.

The inspection team leader will notify the State Fire Marshall to provide awareness of the possible re-opening of the facility.
 5. If a DHEC DHFC inspection team is unavailable, a local building official or FEMA inspectors may be called upon to conduct the inspection. Regardless of the team member composition, DHEC is responsible for establishing and dispatching the inspection teams.
 6. Once the inspection is complete, the team will make a recommendation to the DHEC Deputy Director of Health Regulations indicating whether or not the facility is safe for patient occupancy. The results of the inspection will be submitted to Central Office DHEC within 2 hours and a decision on re-opening will be made by the Deputy Director of Health Regulations immediately upon receiving the inspection information.
 7. If the recommendation is made that the facility is safe for possible re-opening, the Bureau of Health Facilities Licensing (BHFL) will determine whether an inspection by BHFL is necessary. If an inspection by BHFL is necessary, this inspection will be conducted within 5 hours.
 8. Based upon this inspection, or following the decision that a BHFL inspection is not necessary, the BHFL will issue, within 3 hours written notification to the facility administrator that indicates the status of the facility, i.e. permission to occupy and operate, conditions of the permission or the denial of occupancy.
 9. If the facility does not receive approval to re-open after the first inspection, the hospital administration should notify the Bureau of the Division of Health Licensing after some or all of the required repairs have been completed. Once this is done, the inspection process begins again as listed above.