



# 2024 Winter Storm & Dialysis Patient Transportation

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After-Action Report/Improvement Plan

Mar. 12, 2024

## EVENT OVERVIEW

<b>Event Name</b>	2024 Winter Storm & Dialysis Patient Transportation
<b>Event Dates</b>	Jan. 15, 2024, to Jan. 19, 2024
<b>Scope</b>	This event was a weather related, lasting for 5 days. Affecting multiple regions including all the East TN Region.
<b>Focus Area(s)</b>	Response & Recovery
<b>Capabilities</b>	Communications, Transportation, Coordination
<b>Threat or Hazard</b>	Natural/Weather
<b>Scenario</b>	The January 2024 winter storm in the Knox/East Region shattered records, bringing seven consecutive days of at least 4 inches of snow on the ground. Beginning on January 15th, the storm dumped up to 10 inches of snow across the region, disrupting public services. Despite efforts to prioritize public safety, healthcare, and essential services, the absence of reliable public transportation posed significant challenges for dialysis patients, highlighting the importance of coordinated emergency response efforts.
<b>Participating Organizations</b>	Knox/East Tennessee Healthcare Coalition, Fresenius Medical Care, Dialysis Clinic Inc., TDH East Region, Knox County Health Dept., Knox County ADA, Knoxville ADA, ETHRA, Knox County CAC, TEMA, Sevier County EMA, Knox County EMA, DaVita Dialysis, Jefferson County EMA

## Overview:

The January 2024 winter storm in the Knox/East Region posed significant challenges, particularly for vulnerable populations such as dialysis patients. This report aims to highlight successes, areas for improvement, and actionable recommendations to enhance future response efforts.

## What Went Well:

### 1. Preparedness and Response Efforts:

- Facilities demonstrated proactive planning by arranging snow removal services and maintaining extended hours to accommodate patients.
- Regional assistance was instrumental in filling resource gaps and fostering a cohesive response among stakeholders.
- Dialysis center staff exhibited remarkable dedication and flexibility, ensuring uninterrupted patient care despite adverse conditions.

### 2. Effective Communication:

- Weather alerts issued by the Knox/East Tennessee Healthcare Coalition facilitated timely communication and preparation.
- Collaborative efforts, such as regional calls and group chats, enabled efficient coordination and prioritization of resources.
- The commendable initiative of the Jingle Jeepers in providing assistance underscored the power of community support during crises.

### 3. Facility Operations:

- Daily check-ins, treatment tracking, and triage protocols ensured resources were allocated to patients with the greatest need.
- Staff demonstrated exceptional teamwork, adaptability, and commitment to patient well-being throughout the event.

## Areas for Improvement:

### 1. Education and Awareness:

- Improve understanding of dialysis measures among first responders and community leaders to enhance responsiveness to emergent situations.
- Explore educational opportunities and encourage collaboration between dialysis facilities and emergency response agencies.

## 2. Communication Systems:

- Implement a mass communication system to disseminate information efficiently, reducing reliance on individual phone calls during emergencies.

## 3. Transportation Accessibility:

- Address the need for additional transportation options for dialysis patients during winter weather when standard public transportation is unavailable.

## Recommendations and Action Items:

### 1. Training and Education:

- The Knox/East Tennessee Healthcare Coalition will organize training events between dialysis facilities and first responders to enhance understanding of dialysis needs and protocols.
- Encourage local EMAs and dialysis facilities to join CMS17 quarterly meetings for collaboration and addressing emerging issues.

### 2. Communication & Technology Integration:

- Stay informed about the development of dialysis patient categorization apps and explore implementation possibilities as they become available.
- Investigate the feasibility of utilizing the ReadyOp system to streamline communication and ensure timely dissemination of critical information.

### 3. Emergency Response Enhancement:

- Establish clear communication protocols and partnerships between dialysis facilities and local EMAs to streamline resource allocation and response efforts.
- Develop comprehensive emergency plans reflective of lessons learned from the event, ensuring readiness for future crises.

### 4. Resource Procurement and Collaboration:

- Foster collaboration between dialysis facilities and local EMAs to clarify available resources and procurement processes, facilitating efficient resource allocation.
- Encourage participation in LEPC meetings to enhance preparedness and coordination at the local level.

## Other Considerations:

- Explore cost-effective transportation options, such as contracting with EMS, while considering the limitations and challenges faced by overwhelmed emergency services.
- Ensure compliance with legal regulations, such as the Good Samaritan Law, while prioritizing patient safety and care.

## Conclusion:

The collaborative efforts and resilience demonstrated during the January 2024 winter storm highlight the community's capacity to respond to crises effectively. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this report and fostering continued collaboration and preparedness, we can enhance our response capabilities and better support vulnerable populations during future emergencies.

## Improvement Plan

Issue/Area for Improvement	Corrective Action	Capability Element	Primary Responsible Organization	Start Date	Completion Date
<b>Training and Education:</b>	a) The Knox/East Tennessee Healthcare Coalition will organize training events between dialysis facilities and first responders to enhance understanding of dialysis needs and protocols.	Training	KETHC	March 1, 2024	
	b) Encourage local EMAs and dialysis facilities to join CMS17 quarterly meetings for collaboration and addressing emerging issues.	Collaboration	KETHC	March 1, 2024	March 5, 2024, EMAs added to CMS17 meeting invite.
<b>Communication &amp; Technology Integration:</b>	a) Stay informed about the development of dialysis patient categorization apps and explore implementation possibilities as they become available.	Planning	KETHC & Individual Facilities	March 1, 2024	Ongoing
	b) Investigate the feasibility of utilizing the ReadyOp system to streamline communication and ensure timely dissemination of critical information.	Planning, Communication	KETHC	March 1, 2024	
<b>Emergency Response Enhancement:</b>	a) Establish clear communication protocols and partnerships between dialysis facilities and local EMAs to streamline resource allocation and response efforts.	Communication	KETHC & Individual Facilities	March 1, 2024	

Issue/Area for Improvement	Corrective Action	Capability Element	Primary Responsible Organization	Start Date	Completion Date
	b) Develop comprehensive emergency plans reflective of lessons learned from the event, ensuring readiness for future crises.	Planning	Individual Facilities		
<b>Resource Procurement and Collaboration:</b>	a) Foster collaboration between dialysis facilities and local EMAs to clarify available resources and procurement processes, facilitating efficient resource allocation.	Collaboration, Planning	KETHC, Individual Facilities	March 1, 2024	
	b) Encourage participation in LEPC meetings to enhance preparedness and coordination at the local level.	Planning, Communication	KETHC	March 1, 2024	Ongoing