

Prepare for the storm season – safeguard your vaccines

It is important to prepare for storm season which generally occurs between October and March each year. Storms are a common cause of power failure (including power surges, spikes, blackouts and brownouts), which can place your vaccines at risk from temperature fluctuations.

Remember

- Purpose-built vaccine fridges (especially ones with a glass door) may only maintain their temperature for up to 20-30 minutes.
- Domestic refrigerators may hold their temperature up to 4 hours in a power failure due to insulation.

If there is a power failure you may need to transfer your vaccines into alternative safe storage, such as a monitored cooler/s.

*When moving vaccines to a cooler/s, **do not** remove the vaccines from their original packaging. The packaging provides a buffer around the vaccines which helps prevent damage during transportation, protects vaccine potency by reducing exposure to UV light and fluorescent light and assists to maintain a stable temperature around the vaccine.*

Now is the time to check that everything is in place so you can be confident that your vaccines will be as safe as possible during storm season.

Do you have the following?

- Appropriate cooler/s large enough to hold all your vaccines?
- A sufficient number of gel/ice packs to chill the cooler/s?
- A freezer where the gel/ice packs can be stored so ready for use?
- Sufficient packaging material, such as polystyrene chips, bubble-wrap or shredded paper to protect the vaccines from direct contact with the gel/ice packs?
- A digital min/max thermometer and a temperature recording chart for **each** cooler to monitor the vaccine temperature? *QHIP will supply **one** digital min/max thermometer per practice.*
- Each digital min/max thermometer *has had an accuracy check (slush test) and the batteries been changed and in the last 12 months*
- Written procedures for staff to follow?
- A trial run completed to check your procedures work in practice?
- All staff handling vaccines have received training in vaccine management?

Do you have an approved vaccine management protocol [contact Sunshine Coast Public Health Unit for a template to update your vaccine management protocol].

If the answer is '**no**' to any of the above questions, refer to the 'National Vaccine Storage Guidelines – Strive for 5, 2nd edition and handouts 'Managing a vaccine fridge during a power failure' & 'How to pack a cooler'.