



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF

HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH

Commissioner

\*\*\* PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO ALL PEDIATRIC, FAMILY PRACTICE AND OFFICE STAFF\*\*\*

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Assistant Commissioner

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Bureau of Immunization  
2 Lafayette Street, 19<sup>th</sup> Fl.  
New York, NY 10007

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Dear Colleague:

With soaring temperatures and power outages already occurring in New York City, we would like to remind you that the loss of electricity may adversely affect your vaccine supply.

Vaccines that are not stored at recommended temperatures may not protect against disease. The viability and potency of vaccine depends upon the characteristics of the vaccine product and the duration of time that the vaccine was out of recommended refrigerator temperature ranges of 36° to 46° F (2° to 8° C) or freezer temperature ranges of 5° F or colder (-15° C). The live-attenuated virus vaccines [MMR, varicella, the combination MMR-V, and Zoster] are very sensitive to elevated temperatures (heat). If exposed to elevated temperatures they lose potency. While inactivated vaccines may retain potency if exposed to elevated temperatures, they are sensitive to freezing temperatures and will not be effective (this also applies to the live-attenuated influenza vaccine).

Thermometers that record temperatures continuously are the most effective way to monitor refrigerator and freezer temperatures. Using non-continuous thermometers, refrigerator and freezer storage units temperatures should be monitored a minimum of twice daily, once in the morning and again in the afternoon. Although acceptable, these thermometers measure a single point in time and therefore it may be more difficult to assess vaccine viability and potency in the event of a power outage. Should you experience a loss of power to your vaccine storage unit, we recommend that you take the following steps:

1. Do not discard any vaccine.
2. Take a written inventory of all affected vaccines noting the length of time the power was out and the highest (warmest) temperature that both the refrigerator and freezer reached.
3. **Clearly mark these vaccines and do not use them.** Continue to store the vaccine at recommended temperatures in the event that they may still be viable.
4. Contact the manufacturer first at their toll-free numbers for guidance about vaccine use. (GSK 888-825-5249; Merck 800-672-6372; Sanofi Pasteur 800-822-2463; Wyeth 800-934-5556; Novartis 800-244-7668; MedImmune 877-633-4411). For vaccine supplied by the Department of Health, you should also notify the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program at 212-447-8175.
5. If vaccine is determined to not be potent, instructions will be provided about how to return the vaccine so as to recover the excise tax credit for the vaccine.

Information about vaccine storage and handling is available at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Immunization Program web site at:

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/poweroutage/vaccinestorage.asp>,

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vac-mgt-book.htm>, and at

[www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/vacsc2-3.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/vacsc2-3.pdf).

If vaccination of a patient is deferred because of vaccine loss, you should use a log or other tracking system to recall your patients once replacement vaccine is available. For professional or technical questions, please call the Bureau of Immunization at 212-676-2259. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jane R. Zucker, M.D., M.Sc.