



Disaster Mini Drill

Topic: Patient Evacuation Decision & Unit-Level Response

Leader Instructions: This mini-drill builds staff familiarity with unit-level evacuation roles, priorities, and patient movement considerations. Use this guide to help frontline hospital staff think through patient evacuation decisions before an emergency occurs. This discussion focuses on *unit-level actions* and *early-stage decision making* during a potential evacuation. Review questions in advance, identify the ‘right’ answers based on your hospital’s protocols and emergency plans. Adjust the language or skip questions as needed.
Estimated Time: 10–15 mins

Scenario: A prolonged extreme heat event has caused widespread HVAC failure. Indoor temperatures are rising and several units are becoming unsafe for patients. Hospital leadership is evaluating whether evacuation may be required.
Run this scenario assuming your current staffing, patient census, and visitors.

Discussion Questions (select 3–5 across the sections below)

Situation Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What information would the unit need before beginning evacuation preparations? ○ How would staff on the unit know that evacuation is being considered or has been initiated? ○ Who on the unit is responsible for receiving updates from leadership or incident command? ○ What indicators would suggest conditions are worsening and evacuation may be necessary? ○ How should staff communicate urgent concerns from the unit to incident command?
Evacuation Triage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How would your unit begin prioritizing patients for evacuation? ○ Which patients would need to leave first and why? ○ Which patients might require specialized transport teams or equipment? ○ Which patients could potentially be discharged instead of transferred during evacuation? ○ Which patients would be most difficult to move safely from the unit? ○ How will the unit clearly indicate and communicate each patient’s evacuation priority level to all staff involved in the movement process?
Unit Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What steps should the unit take to begin preparing patients for evacuation? ○ Who gathers essential patient documentation and medications? ○ What equipment must accompany certain patients during evacuation? ○ How should staff prepare patient rooms or equipment before leaving the unit? ○ How are visitors on the unit managed during evacuation preparation? ○ How should staff communicate evacuation plans to patients and families?
Patient Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How are patients physically moved off the unit during evacuation? ○ Who coordinates movement through stairwells or corridors? ○ Who is responsible for escorting patients during evacuation? ○ How will staff know where each patient is being sent?
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How will we keep track of which patients have been evacuated and which remain on the unit? ○ Who is responsible for maintaining the unit’s evacuation list? ○ How will the unit account for visitors present during the event? ○ How are we keeping track of staff on the unit? ○ How will staff on the unit know where each patient has been relocated? ○ How will we confirm that all patients, visitors, and staff are accounted for?



Additional Questions for Specialty Units or Advanced Discussion

How to Use these questions:

- Replace or add to the provided questions on the front worksheet as needed.
- Use these if you want to explore specific challenges or patient populations.
- Focus on questions that resonate most with your hospital's protocols and priorities.

General Preparedness Questions

- What are the immediate priorities to address this situation in your area?
- Are there any specific challenges or delays we need to address?
- Do you have the resources and staffing needed, or is additional support required?
- Are there safety concerns we need to address for staff or patients?

Special Patient Populations

- How would evacuation change for ICU or ventilated patients on the unit?
- What additional support would be required for pediatric or NICU patients?
- Which patients require life-sustaining equipment that cannot easily be moved?
- Are there patients whose condition could deteriorate rapidly during evacuation?
- What additional considerations are needed when evacuating behavioral health patients?
- How should staff manage patients who may become agitated or resistant during evacuation?
- What role do security or behavioral health staff play during evacuation?

Movement Challenges

- What happens if elevators are unavailable?
- How would patients be moved down stairwells safely?
- Does the unit have access to evacuation sleds or similar? Do you know where they are located?
- Who on the unit is trained to use this equipment?

Unit Coordination

- How would the charge nurse coordinate evacuation activities on the unit?
- What role does the unit secretary or coordinator play during evacuation?
- How do techs or support staff assist with patient movement?
- What is the process for calling in additional staff, and who is responsible for initiating that request?

Providers (MD, DO, NP, PA, Residents)

- How do providers support evacuation triage decisions for patients on the unit?
- Which patients require provider assessment before transfer or evacuation?
- What role do providers play in determining which patients could be discharged rather than transferred?
- What information should providers communicate to receiving teams during evacuation?

Reflection and Problem-Solving

- What challenges did we identify during this discussion?
- What resources or processes would make evacuation easier for this unit?
- Are there policies or procedures that staff should review or clarify?
- What is one action we could take to improve readiness for evacuation?



Disaster Mini Drill Hot Wash

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Leader Instructions: Use this template or your own to track follow-up actions and document your efforts. Keeping a record helps ensure improvements and demonstrates preparedness during evaluations or reviews.

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Findings:

1. What went well?

2. Opportunities for Improvement?

Follow-Up Actions:

- Action Item:
 - Responsible Party:
 - Deadline:

- Action Item:
 - Responsible Party:
 - Deadline:

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 - Responsible Party:
 - Deadline: