

# Supply Chain and Pharmacy Response

## DURING THE 2017 HURRICANE SEASON



## Introduction

In times of crises – before, during and after a disaster – healthcare systems have little time to plan ahead and prepare for often devastating and sustained impacts. Throughout moments like these, healthcare systems depend heavily on partnerships to help them navigate the complexities of delivering and receiving resources, medicines and care that patients need. These coordinated

efforts have been surreptitiously forged in response to and in the wake of catastrophes such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and have continued to strengthen over a decade later, as demonstrated in the momentous 2017 hurricane season when three storms – Harvey, Irma and Maria – sequentially impacted communities in Texas, Louisiana, Florida and Puerto Rico.

## Background

During the 2017 hurricane season, connecting patients to needed resources and medical care relied upon collaboration and cooperation between public and private entities that spanned the healthcare continuum. Our role at Healthcare Ready included identifying needs on-the-ground through coordination with federal, state, territory, and local government agencies and NGO partners. We also used our relationships and knowledge to bridge gaps in care and resources by connecting with our private partners – including

pharmaceutical manufacturers, distributors and pharmacies – who had the resources urgently needed within impacted communities.

The three hurricanes had vastly different, yet devastating impacts. Government agencies and corporations were uniquely challenged in their response efforts, relying on both pre-planned and ad hoc strategies to cope with each individual storm, often times simultaneously. Critical infrastructure damage had tremendous impacts on healthcare access and continuity of patient care. However, partnerships, goodwill, and innovative approaches from supply chain companies and pharmacies helped address unmet needs and fill gaps for those affected.

*Due to the unique circumstances of the 2017 hurricane season,*

***Healthcare Ready sustained a three-month activation to address patient needs and connect our public and private partners for eighty-one days***

*– a record response for our team.*

Supply chain and pharmacy organizations provided public-private response efforts in all shapes, sizes, and variants. Some assisted by giving patients access to their medicines free-of-charge, while others maintained a consistent, reliable supply of treatments and equipment to shelters, hospitals and other resource centers that often were isolated from traditional means of transportation. These services were essential to ensure that deliveries were completed without significant lapse, when possible, and life-saving medicines and medical supplies reached facilities that needed them to care for patients.

# Private Sector Response in the Wake of a Public Crisis

The critically significant role that the private sector plays before, during and after crises was exemplified during the 2017 hurricane season. Our private sector partners rose to the challenge with innovative approaches to address the immediate, on-the-ground needs of patients, families and providers by partnering with public entities to identify and respond to specific, community- and state-based relief efforts in real time. These efforts often overcame and worked around additional hurdles, such as state-by-state regulations on transportation of medicines and medical supplies, logistical challenges, and infrastructure barriers.

When crafting multi-community and regional strategies to multiple emergency and disaster relief efforts, every factor must be considered. These considerations – coupled with constraints on infrastructure, availability

of doctors, medicines, vital resources like water and food, and communication – meant that public-private and corporate partnerships needed to coordinate and collaborate. As evidenced in previous disaster responses, partnerships were best equipped to devise personalized approaches for each community, state, and sometimes individual patient to ensure that, when disasters occurred, patients maintained access to essential care.

*At Healthcare Ready, we are honored to be working with government agencies, non-profit organizations, private corporations as well as the spectrum of the healthcare supply chain and pharmacy community to **ensure that, when the unthinkable happens, communities, states, patients, and providers have the support, resources, and medications they need.***

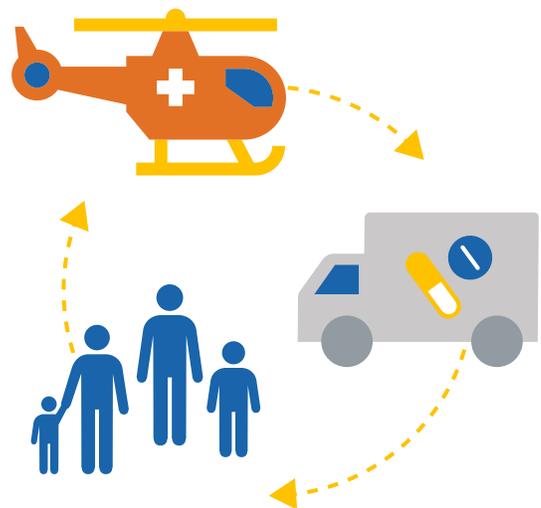
## Supply Chain Response

Manufacturers and distributors of medicines have an important daily job, which is to discover, develop, produce, and transport life-saving medicines to the patients that need them across the world. When unpredictable emergencies and disasters impact the normal healthcare supply chain, affected patients, families, and communities are often in even greater need of medicines, treatment and supplies.

Healthcare supply chain organizations were, in many ways, the backbone of healthcare response and relief efforts during the 2017 hurricane season. From airlifting critical treatments, vaccines, and medical products to affected areas, to providing medicines free of charge, the healthcare supply chain rose above and beyond to meet communities' needs during life-threatening conditions and scenarios.

The resilience of communities during emergencies and disasters is best supported by leveraging the healthcare supply chain and forming partnerships with

private sector companies. The resources, capabilities, and commitments that the private sector brings to the table can often be the difference-maker for those impacted patients and families. In reflecting on the 2017 hurricane season and other events, it remains clear that the healthcare supply chain is the backbone of response and relief efforts.





## Pharmacy Response

The role of pharmacies and pharmacists in preparing for and responding to the 2017 hurricane season has markedly evolved since Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Our healthcare system and emergency and disaster response community view pharmacies and pharmacists as essential first responders and “more than just a place to pick up medicines.”

Both chain and independently-owned pharmacies are key building blocks of communities across the country, and their importance is even greater during disasters and emergencies. Pharmacies were invaluable resources during the 2017 hurricane season for public health information, healthcare services, and more during the resource-strained, life-threatening scenarios brought about in the impacted areas.

Numerous factors have contributed to the expanding role of pharmacies. Advances in technology have enabled better information sharing between pharmacists and providers, allowing patients to engage more proactively in their care. Further expanding the scope of practice and services of pharmacies has facilitated more expedient access to life-saving drugs and care, which are essential during disasters and emergencies.



### SPOTLIGHT:

## Pfizer's Assistance to Patients During the 2017 Hurricane Season

Pfizer is a major pharmaceutical company that develops medicines and vaccines to help improve the lives of patients. For over 150 years, Pfizer has worked to make a difference through supporting accessible, reliable and affordable healthcare around the world.

***“Having strong lines of communications with our partners will continue to be key throughout emergency and disaster response.”***

### GARY PELLETIER

Senior Director of Global Health & Patient Access  
Pfizer Inc

As a leading biopharmaceutical company producing life-saving therapies, Pfizer's role during the 2017 hurricane season was critical to the health of thousands of patients, families and caregivers. Pfizer's commitment to helping affected patients access medicines was exhibited through many comprehensive financial assistance programs and donations.

Through Pfizer *RxPathways*® patients affected by the hurricanes were provided with helpful guidance on ways to obtain medicines for free or at a savings. During the 2017 hurricane season, Pfizer *RxPathways* often waived income documentation requirements for affected patients, allowing them to access their medicines quickly despite the devastation they may have experienced.

The importance of the pharmaceutical supply chain is often taken for granted, and Pfizer's commitment to patients during the 2017 hurricane season demonstrates the many critical public benefits provided from biopharmaceutical companies beyond researching, developing, and manufacturing life-saving medicines.

## AmerisourceBergen's Pivotal Supply Chain Activities During the 2017 Hurricane Season

**AmerisourceBergen is a major healthcare distributor serving the health system, pharmacy, physician practice, manufacturer, and animal health markets. Through their commitment to excellent distribution services, AmerisourceBergen aims to increase supply chain efficiency, improve product access, and enhance patient care.**

As a healthcare distributor, AmerisourceBergen was often the on-the-ground “arms and legs” of the healthcare supply chain’s response to the 2017 hurricane season. As the critical link between biopharmaceutical manufacturers and providers, AmerisourceBergen plays a day-to-day role in maintaining a complex supply chain of life-saving cures, vaccines, treatment, and supplies to over 50,000 healthcare facilities across the nation.

After the supply chain was interrupted by the 2017 hurricanes in affected areas, AmerisourceBergen leveraged its extensive network of employees and partners at distribution centers and delivery organizations to help ensure healthcare providers maintained sufficient stocks of medicines and supplies. Major roads and highways were often blocked by flooding and/or debris, meaning AmerisourceBergen’s transportation team needed to rapidly scout out alternative routes and identify transportations means.

For example, less than 24 hours after Hurricane Harvey hit Texas, AmerisourceBergen team members airlifted medicines and supplies and used ‘duck boats’ capable of traversing floodwaters to reach hospitals in the Houston area. In Florida, employees proactively reached out to providers a week in advance of Hurricane Irma to recommend advanced ordering on sufficient medicines and supplies to outlast the aftermath of extreme winds and rain. Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico presented unique challenges due to restricted telecommunication and travel conditions – but AmerisourceBergen worked with public and private partners to charter a jet with supplies, medicines, and food until ports were repaired and reopened.

In addition to serving providers and patients, AmerisourceBergen demonstrated a commitment to serving and protecting its own employees who were stationed in affected areas. AmerisourceBergen’s distribution centers in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico served as shelters for employees and their loved ones, offering electricity, showers, and emergency supplies such as food, water, charcoal, clothing, and baby food.

The 2017 hurricane season highlighted the critical need for public-private engagement to prepare for unpredictable events, such as those that occurred in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico. These events proved that the healthcare supply chain depends on the resiliency, commitment, and resources of private sector partners such as AmerisourceBergen during emergencies and disasters.

***“For AmerisourceBergen, we are committed to ensuring patient access to vital pharmaceutical products every day. It is during these rare occasions, when something like an unprecedented natural disaster jeopardizes the critical and necessary medical deliveries that the role of AmerisourceBergen—comes to the forefront.”***

**ERIN HORVATH**

Senior Vice President of Distribution Services  
AmerisourceBergen

SPOTLIGHT: 

## CVS's Role as An Anchor Organization During the 2017 Hurricane Season

CVS is the largest pharmacy healthcare company in the U.S. with over 9,800+ retail locations and five million customers each day. With a suite of integrated services, CVS is reinventing pharmacy and helping people on their path to better health.

As the role of pharmacies has evolved, CVS has expanded its business model beyond the traditional role of pharmacies. During the 2017 hurricane season, the deep community ties, resources, and resilience of CVS were fully demonstrated across the affected areas.

For example, before the hurricanes made landfall, CVS deployed backup generators to their facilities to ensure pharmacy operations could continue for patients if and when power outages occurred. CVS also sent prescription refill reminder phone calls, emails, and text alerts to patients in the areas expected to be impacted by the hurricanes. These alerts helped ensure patients were proactively prepared with a sufficient supply of needed medicines in case of severe infrastructure damage and/or evacuation.

In the aftermath of the hurricanes, CVS deployed staff and resources to help ensure access to medicines and treatment. For example, CVS deployed mobile pharmacies in many of the affected areas, including

*"We deploy mobile pharmacies, pop-up pharmacies, and generators throughout affected areas - once storms make landfall we prioritize and allocate these resources in emergency response."*

### BRIAN OLSEN

Head of Enterprise Response and Resiliency  
CVS Health

two mobile units to the Texas Convention Center for the weeks following Hurricane Harvey. Additionally, CVS Pharmacy and CVS Caremark (the retail pharmacy and pharmacy benefit management business units, respectively) activated a process allowing pharmacists to fill one-time emergency refills of a 10-day supply of prescription medicines for those impacted by the hurricanes.

CVS also leveraged partnerships with disaster relief organizations and other healthcare supply chain companies to connect patients to the medicines and treatment they often desperately needed but weren't able to access without emergency assistance from CVS.

The role of pharmacies during emergencies and disasters is expanding, and so too are CVS's capabilities and resources becoming increasingly important. Through public-private partnerships, engagement on forward-thinking policies and regulations, and thoughtful engagement on existing barriers and challenges, CVS's commitment to helping patients during emergencies and disasters will continue to be a crucial public benefit.

*"The work of our employees demonstrated a commitment of the organization to make sure patients that need medicines were able to get them."*

### BRIAN OLSEN

Head of Enterprise Response and Resiliency  
CVS Health

