



# Critical Supplies Guide

Access to critical supplies during disasters is essential to ensuring the continuity of medical services and providing care to patients who may be directly or indirectly impacted by the disaster. The specific supplies needed can vary based on the services provided, population served, and potential impacts of the disaster. With proper planning, health centers can respond more quickly and effectively in support of their patients thereby helping mitigate the potential immediate and long-term impacts of the disaster. Being prepared with these essential items can contribute to better patient outcomes and overall community resilience.

*A critical supplies list includes specific supplies that are likely to be needed in case of disaster. Lists are unique to the patient population, hazards profile, and facility's services provided under normal operations.*

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## Potential Supply Disruptors

Emergency events have the potential to cause significant disruptions at various pressure points along the healthcare supply chain, which in turn may affect the degree to which health care providers and facilities are able to obtain critically needed supplies.

- Normal channels of procuring medical supplies via distributors become partially or totally unavailable.
- Supply shipments to facilities are delayed or halted altogether.
- Supplies are placed on backorder and/or needs-based allocation (capped or reduced amount available to customers based on previous buying history to avoid over-ordering).
- Those with a typically smaller purchasing footprint may be deprioritized by distributors/suppliers in favor of servicing contracts for larger purchases.
- Emergency events pose an increased risk to vulnerable populations as well as communities in rural and remote areas. Approximately 42% of health centers nationwide are located in rural areas.

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## Mitigation

It is therefore essential that health centers understand their own supply needs, maintain their own emergency supply to the extent possible, and have strategies for emergency procurement. A documented list of critical supplies created as part of emergency preparedness planning has the following benefits:

- Provides an emergency supply benchmark for procurement purposes.
- Serves as a quick reference guide for potential supply requisitions from vendors or community partners during emergencies.
- Provides options for cross-training of staff on emergency supply management.

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## Categories: Essential Disaster Supplies

The specific types of critical supplies that may be required can differ depending on the nature of the disaster and the services offered by the health center. However, there are fundamental categories of critical supplies that health centers should consider in order to enhance their supply chain readiness and ensure continuity of patient care in an emergency.



### Medications and Pharmaceuticals

Having a supply of essential medications for common health conditions is vital. This includes medications for chronic diseases, infections, pain relief, and basic first aid. Anticipating patients' needs and having an ample supply of these medications can be crucial during disasters.



### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

CHCs should maintain a stock of PPE, including masks, gloves, gowns, and face shields. These supplies protect both patients and healthcare staff from potential infectious diseases.



### First Aid Supplies

Basic first aid supplies like bandages, antiseptics, wound dressings, and over-the-counter pain relievers are essential for addressing minor injuries and ailments that patients or staff may experience during a disaster.



### Sanitation and Hygiene Supplies

Supplies like hand sanitizers, disinfectants, soap, and basic hygiene items can help prevent the spread of diseases and ensure a safe environment for patients, which is especially vital during disasters.



### Nutritional Supplies

Keeping a supply of bottled water and shelf-stable food onsite can support patients and staff in the event of no-notice disasters that temporarily impact the ability to leave the health center.



### Office Supplies

Maintaining a designated supply of notepads, paper, pens, printer ink, and additional office supplies on hand supports continuity of administrative operations.

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## Considerations for Developing a Critical Supplies List

Developing a critical supplies list requires an interdisciplinary team and a thorough understanding of day-to-day operations, emergency operations, local and regional hazards, and the patient population. It is a time investment up front that benefits from maintenance at least once a year and will benefit the health center and patients during times of disaster response and recovery.

### Tips for Developing Critical Supplies Lists for Your Facility

1. Assemble team of personnel responsible for development and maintenance of critical supply list.
  - a. This can be the emergency management committee or a sub-committee of the larger committee.
  - b. Minimum representation includes: clinical personnel, health and safety expertise, supply chain responsibility.
2. Review the [Sample Critical Supplies List for Health Centers and Clinics](#).
  - This list is designed to serve as a reference point and an initial planning framework offering critical supply related considerations for health centers in emergency preparedness planning and supply chain readiness. It is based on guidance from the World Health Organization, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, emergency operations plans and other resources highlighting critically needed healthcare supplies that have previously experienced and/or been at risk for major supply disruptions.
3. Create your supply list using a method that best integrates with your current operations. Options include:
  - a. Create a database in Excel
  - b. Create a database within your existing supply chain management system
  - c. Create a list in Word
4. Begin with an understanding of standard services provided by your health center and copy the relevant resources from the [Sample Critical Supplies List](#) resource into your chosen system for creating the list.
5. Consider the essential services you provide as documented in your emergency operations plan and add to your list accordingly.
  - a. What services will you provide more of? (Ex: First aid)
  - b. What services will you continue providing? (Ex: Support for chronic conditions, especially those likely to be impacted by disaster)
  - c. What services will be temporarily suspended? (Ex: Vision screenings)
6. Consider your patient population and rates of disease prevalent in the community and adjust supply list and quantities accordingly.
7. Consider the types of hazards your community is frequently exposed to and how those hazards can create or exacerbate certain medical conditions and modify your supply list accordingly.
8. Ensure the supply list includes an estimate of expected quantities necessary to meet these services *under emergency conditions*, and review and update the plan at least once every two years.

- a. In an emergency your burn rate of certain supplies may be significantly higher than during standard conditions. The inventory quantities you may need depend on patient volume, disease prevalence, types of disaster exposure, capacity to store supplies, etc.

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## Keeping Your Critical Supplies List Up-to-Date

To maintain a state of readiness, review and update the critical supplies list on a regular basis.

1. Review at least every two years and update.
  - Every year, a designated team should review the list and make any modifications.
2. Update with any major changes in clinical services provided.
  - For example, a health center that adds a pediatric practice or services needs to add pediatric supply considerations.
3. Update with any physical location changes.
  - Moving physical location can change the types of hazards a clinic is exposed to and therefore the supply needs.
4. Update after incidents and exercises.
  - Any usage of the disaster plan whether through exercise or actual emergency should include debriefing on supply needs. What supplies were needed but not available? What was available but in insufficient quantities? What other supply chain related challenges and areas for improvement, as well as areas of strength did your facility experience, if any?
  - What new or other technologies or alternate products could have made the experience smoother?

**Healthcare Ready** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works to ensure patient access to health care in times of disaster and disease outbreaks. Established in 2007, Healthcare Ready functions as a public-private partnership that works to bridge the private sector health care supply chain with public health and emergency management on preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. Their mission is to build and enhance the resilience of communities before, during, and after emergencies. Learn more at [HealthcareReady.org](https://HealthcareReady.org).

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