

# Winter Storm Caduceus

Exercise Briefing 03/17/26



The background of the slide features a large, semi-transparent seal of the New Mexico Bureau of Health Emergency Management. The seal is circular with a blue border. Inside the border, the words "BUREAU OF HEALTH EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT" are written in a semi-circle at the top, and "NEW MEXICO" is written at the bottom. The center of the seal depicts a landscape with mountains and a caduceus (a staff with two snakes and wings) superimposed over it.

## Welcome and Overview

John Hodges - NMDOH BHEM Healthcare Preparedness and Response  
Section Manager

Ken Gipson – NMDOH BHEM Healthcare Preparedness and Response  
Program Coordinator

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## Exercise Overview

- ▣ Exercise scope: This tabletop is designed to test response to a Winter Storm
- ▣ The scenario has five sections with discussion questions following
  - ▣ At the end of the scenario, everyone should participate in a debriefing or “hotwash” and discuss successes, failures, and lessons learned
- ▣ Mission area(s): Preparation, Response, and Mitigation

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## Objectives and Core Capabilities

- ▣ Describe your individual role in the response
- ▣ Identify at least one gap in your agency's existing Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)
- ▣ Identify your personal knowledge gaps
- ▣ Understand and plan for potential specific needs of both staff and patients during an ice storm emergency
- ▣ Identify and contact appropriate partnering agencies during business hours as well as after hours

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## Participant Roles and Responsibilities

- ▣ **Players:** Respond to situation presented based on current plans, policies, and procedures
- ▣ **Observers:** Support players in developing responses, but do not participate in moderated discussion
- ▣ **Facilitators:** Provide situation updates and moderate discussions
- ▣ **Evaluators:** Observe and document player discussions

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## Exercise Structure

### **What is a Tabletop Exercise?**

- ▣ People come together in a no-fault environment to review and discuss a hypothetical emergency situation
- ▣ Designed to allow participants to talk through plans and problems  
NOT designed to measure anyone's performance
- ▣ Serves as a springboard for further planning and more comprehensive exercises

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## Exercise Guidelines

- ▣ This is an open, low-stress, no-fault environment. Varying viewpoints, even disagreements, are expected
- ▣ Base your responses on the current plans and capabilities of your organization
- ▣ Decisions are not precedent setting; consider different approaches and suggest improvements
- ▣ Issue identification is not as valuable as suggestions and recommended actions that could improve Winter Storm preparedness efforts; problem-solving efforts should be the focus

## Assumptions and Artificialities

- ▣ The exercise is conducted in a no-fault learning environment wherein capabilities, plans, systems, and processes will be evaluated
- ▣ The exercise scenario is plausible, and events occur as they are presented
- ▣ All players receive information at the same time
- ▣ Some community partners may not be available to participate in the exercise, so the assumption can be made if necessary, that the community partner would be involved in an actual emergency (Fire, EMS, Law Enforcement, NMDOT, NMDOH, NMDHSEM, FEMA, and Tribal Partners)

The background features a large, semi-transparent seal of the New Mexico State Health Emergency Management. The seal is circular with a blue border containing the text "NEW MEXICO STATE HEALTH EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT" in white. Inside the seal, there is a central emblem depicting a landscape with mountains, a sun, and a caduceus (a staff with two snakes entwined around it and wings at the top).

## Exercise Schedule

Welcome and Introduction

Module 1: Winter Storm Warning

Module 2: Government Preparedness

Module 3: Caduceus Arrives

Break

Hot Wash

Closing Comments

## Module 1: Winter Storm Warning

- ❑ Winter Storm Caduceus has been wreaking havoc across Utah, Colorado after arriving out of Canada as a strong cold front. Salt Lake City and Denver are completely snowed in, and the National Guard has been called in to assist.
- ❑ A Winter Storm Warning has been issued for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of New Mexico on a line north of Las Cruces to Reserve. Only the bootheel is expected to be spared in this storm. It is expected to arrive in North and Central New Mexico in two days.
- ❑ Farmington and the Four Corners Region have already declared a state of emergency, and the Governor has placed the NMNG on alert.

# Forecast For Winter Storm Caduceus



## Module 1 - 11/21/2026 - 0600

- ❑ The National Weather Service has just updated, saying the storm has picked up speed, but is expected to stall over Central New Mexico and the Albuquerque Metro Area
- ❑ Estimates of 24-36 inches of snow in the Metro and 36-48 inches in the East Mountains, and sub-freezing temps are expected for several days.
- ❑ Warnings for vulnerable persons (Sick, Elderly, Homeless, etc) Have been issued.
- ❑ Schools, City, and State Offices have been closed in advance of the storm

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## Module 1: Key Issues

- ▣ How will this storm impact your agency operations?
- ▣ What is your activation procedure and staffing plan for emergency situations?
- ▣ What information do you have available for patients to assist them in storm preparation?
- ▣ Is it time to ask for assistance?
- ▣ If so, what assistance will you need?

## Module 2: Government Preparedness





## Module 2 - 01/21/26 - 1500

Albuquerque and Bernalillo County Emergency Management Office requests local healthcare providers to review emergency plans relating to:

- ▣ Downed trees & power outages
- ▣ Hazardous road conditions
- ▣ Interruptions in public transportation
- ▣ Evacuation & Sheltering

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## Module 2

- ▣ Red Cross Shelters opened, including a limited number of medical and access and functional needs shelters to accommodate those without power.
- ▣ NMDOH has activated their Department Operations Center in conjunction with DHSEM activating their Emergency Operations Center
- ▣ NMDOT is already being stretched due to the enormity of the storm.
- ▣ Media publicizes shelter locations

## Message from the Governor

The Governor appears on TV, making a personal appeal to all people in the path of the storm to avoid traveling in the icy conditions as roads will be treacherous and asks people to tune in to local media to get emergency updates.





## Module 2: Key Issues

- ❑ Who will identify the vulnerable/special needs populations you need to reach immediately among your patients?
- ❑ What emergency supplies should your patients and staff have on hand? Have you provided any “shelter in place training?”
- ❑ What support does your staff need to be able to maintain agency operations?
- ❑ Do your patients know what type of shelter they should go to, where it is, and how they will get there?
- ❑ Will your staff be available to stay with patients if they are snowed in?

## Module 3: Caduceus Arrives

- ▣ Everything is encased in snow and ice. Estimates are close to 38 inches.
- ▣ Downed trees, utility poles and power lines are widespread. Accidents are stressing Emergency Services.
- ▣ Roadways are covered in snow and ice. I-40 is closed at Tramway, and I-25 is closed at HWY 550. Numerous other main roads are closed as well.
- ▣ Even 4x4s are having a rough time in the snow.
- ▣ Multiple calls for assistance are coming into 911, and to your agency.



## Module 3 - 11/22/2026 - 1200

- ▣ Roads are closed
- ▣ It's cold and windy. Creating massive snow drifts
- ▣ People are trapped in devastated areas without power or heat
- ▣ Some shelters have been damaged, and now must evacuate
- ▣ This creates overflow in other shelters
- ▣ NMDOT website and phone system crashes due to the volume of calls and requests
- ▣ Fire, Police, and EMS severely hindered by roadways
- ▣ Staff shortages everywhere
- ▣ Destroyed or damaged vehicles and equipment all over roads

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## Module 3

- ❑ Officials estimate that it will take weeks, and maybe even months to restore critical infrastructure to all areas.
- ❑ Shelters fill and overflow as people run out of food, cold tolerance, and patience.
- ❑ Healthcare providers responding to sharp increase in patients suffering from hypothermia, frost bite, carbon monoxide poisoning, and respiratory infections.
- ❑ Some staff still cannot get out of their homes.



## Module 3: Key Issues

- ▣ What process do you have in place to locate patients who may be in shelters?
- ▣ How are you collaborating with shelters to take care of them?
- ▣ Will they ask you to take on additional shelter patients? Can you?
- ▣ Are you allowed to?
- ▣ Who will pay for their care?
- ▣ Will your staff be staying in shelters as well?
- ▣ What about childcare and other family responsibilities?
- ▣ What other agencies/providers should you be working with?
- ▣ Who is in charge of communicating with outside entities?
- ▣ What services might your staff or patient evacuees need when displaced for longer than a few days?
- ▣ Will you need any mental health supports for patients and/or staff?

The seal of the Bureau of Health Emergency Management, New Mexico, is a circular emblem. It features a central caduceus (a staff with two snakes entwined around it and wings at the top) superimposed over a map of New Mexico. The text "BUREAU OF HEALTH EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT" is written in a circle around the top, and "NEW MEXICO" is written at the bottom. The seal is rendered in a light, semi-transparent style.

## Module 3: Discussion

How did you do? Anything “stump” you?

Should your emergency plan be modified in any way?

Did you learn anything new?



## Hot Wash

- ▣ Strengths

- 
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- ▣ Areas for Improvement

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Data will be compiled in a formal After Action Report

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## Closing Comments

- ▣ This scenario is based upon actual events that have not only occurred in Winter Storm events, but others such as wildfires, floods, and hurricanes.
- ▣ The lessons learned can be applied for different types of severe weather/natural disasters.

Thank you for your participation.