



County of San Diego

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MONITORING THE EFFECTS OF HURRICANE HELENE AND EAST COAST PORT DOCKWORKER STRIKE ON THE MEDICAL SUPPLY CHAIN

The San Diego County EMS Office is monitoring the ongoing situation regarding Hurricane Helene and the East Coast port dockworker strike, both of which could have significant implications for healthcare services and EMS delivery.

As outlined in the recent [statement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#), the worker strike affecting East Coast and Gulf Coast ports may disrupt essential supply chains. While HHS does not anticipate immediate impacts on medical or pharmaceutical supplies, it reports:

“...FDA and ASPR have been in touch with trade associations, distributors, and manufacturers to limit impacts on consumers and assess vulnerabilities. ASPR and FDA have and will continue working closely with HHS to quickly identify potential shortages of lifesaving products impacted by a strike to determine the cause and work with manufacturers and distributors to address local, regional, and national needs as they arise.”

Furthermore, Hurricane Helene has impacted intravenous (IV) fluid manufacturing capacity, as detailed in a recent [press release by Baxter](#). The disruption to the production and distribution of IV fluids creates an additional strain on existing supply chain issues.

In preparation for potential impacts locally, all EMS agencies should take the following steps:

- Conduct a thorough inventory of critical supplies and medications to assess readiness for potential shortages
- Communicate with suppliers to stay informed regarding availability and contingency plans
- Be prepared to adjust resource allocation strategies to ensure continuity of care
- Implement all appropriate [medication shortage strategies and report potential shortages](#) as outlined on the County of San Diego EMS webpage
- Only place IVs if there is an immediate or probable need to deliver intravenous fluids
- The use of saline locks or crystalloid-filled IV extension sets is preferred for IV medication administration when fluid replacement is not indicated

Thank you for your assistance in continuing to provide outstanding care to our patients.

Sincerely,

Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, FIFEM, FAEMS, Medical Director
San Diego County Emergency Medical Services Office
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cc: Andrew Parr, EMS Administrator