

October 2, 2016

Dear Human Resources Director; Chief Nursing Officer or Director of Patient Care Services,

At this time of year, when the weather begins to change, we are reminded of past hurricanes and blizzards and our need to remain prepared for any weather emergency.

Whether it is a hurricane or a blizzard, extreme conditions make travel perilous. Many of our nurses commute distances and must consider these conditions in carrying out their work during emergencies.

The safety of our patients comes first.

NYSNA nurses stand ready to meet an emergency with any and all appropriate measures. NYSNA needs to be fully informed so that we can assist in getting necessary information to RNs during an emergency.

The need for a Centralized Command Structure is compelling and we call upon management to put in place such a structure without delay. NYSNA should be an integral part of the Command Structure. We feel strongly that there is an obligation, especially under emergency circumstances, to keep NYSNA informed.

We urge that lines of communication be staffed and that communication from hospital management be informed and continuous. This is key to an effective Command Structure.

Social media is an essential outreach tool to staff; we employ it and we strongly suggest that you do too. This is an effective method to stay in touch with nurses and a way many of our members have come to expect.

For your information, we will be posting hotline and e-mail emergency communication that will share pertinent information with our members.

Please identify which authority we should contact in our respective facilities with questions and for direction during the emergency. Many of our members have already indicated that they see no notices making staff aware of contingency plans for work schedules and other issues.

In past months, we have discussed the need for Advanced Planning to support those who can arrange for appropriate child care and/or deal with other challenging home circumstances and thus can get to work, perhaps stay over, or work extra hours if need be. This is the best way to avoid exhausting those who make it in — by supporting those who are not sure what to expect and need assurances. Yet in many facilities, these discussions did not lead to policies for emergency planning.

There are many other issues related to staff remaining at the hospital during emergencies. These issues require your immediate attention.

Please give us information regarding emergency transportation to work, pick up locations and times of pick up. These locations must be indoors.

Going forward, as an emergency will last for several days, or longer, what is of paramount importance is the need for a process of coordination of schedules. We are prepared to fill in for RNs who cannot make the commute in these weather conditions, and to help relieve those who have had to remain at the hospital because they cannot commute home, and to address other circumstances, but we need to confer and coordinate these scheduling issues, with uniformity.

It is only appropriate that we receive explicit information about expectations for work, including schedules and overtime pay. We are informing our members to keep records of time worked. Accommodations, including breakfast, lunch and dinner, should be provided.

We also ask for information as to what plans are in place for sleeping/showering arrangements and any other patient support measures planned.

Your immediate attention is critical to meeting this emergency effectively. Please inform us of contact information within your management designated for this emergency.

Thank you.

NYSNA Representative