

## ANNE ARUNDEL MEDICAL CENTER

ANNE ARUNDEL PREPARES FOR HURRICANE IRENE  
WITH LIVEPROCESS

Anne Arundel Medical Center (AAMC) is a 336-bed hospital in Annapolis, Maryland, that is a vital community health resource. While a new patient tower with additional operating rooms, a new PACU, 40 new in-patient beds and a bigger emergency room has greatly increased Anne Arundel's capability to serve its community, exponential growth in patient visits – 26,000 last year alone has made it clear that Anne Arundel is a pillar of the healthcare community in the Annapolis area. The hospital has good working relationships with nearby facilities, such as Baltimore Washington Medical Center and the Annapolis Naval Clinic, and realizes that it is a crucial member of the safety net for any sort of disaster or emergency. Anne Arundel relies on sophisticated emergency management technology, LiveProcess, to help automate what can be a complicated and time-consuming process – preparing for the worst.

*"We use LiveProcess to drill, record and respond to events. It allows everyone to focus on their job and their duties."*

*Anne Marie Pessagno  
Nursing Director for Acute Care Services*

## TEAM APPROACH

Dena Jackson, director of Supply Chain, and AnnMarie Pessagno, senior nursing director for Acute Care Services, are accustomed to being in the center of any storm. Jackson, who served in the U.S. Army, utilizes her military background and experience in logistics when working a response, as the hospital incident command system model is built on ICS models used by military, police and fire officials.

Pessagno, a registered nurse and nursing supervisor, is one of the first to be called to any event. Both women work with an expanded team of physicians, nurses, administrators and others on the emergency management team.

"We take a team approach and integrate many different points of view into our emergency management team," notes Jackson.



*The staff used LiveProcess in concert with Active Staffer and Bed Board to ensure top-notch coordination of everything from supplies to leaks the hospital was experiencing in various rooms.*

In August of 2011, that proverbial storm was something a bit more precipitous: Hurricane Irene. The first major hurricane of the annual hurricane season and the ninth named storm, Irene strengthened into a Category 3 hurricane while passing through the Bahamas, and was headed to the eastern seaboard to make landfall in the U.S. As Irene was hitting North Carolina's Outer Banks on the morning of August 27, cities up the east coast were preparing for a storm that could have significant impact. In Washington, D.C., the forecasted arrival of Hurricane Irene caused postponement of the planned August 28 dedication ceremony for the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial. In anticipation of the storm, thousands of sandbags were prepared for placement at flood-prone Washington Metro station entrances. Amtrak service from Washington's Union Station southward was cancelled.

Anne Arundel readied itself for the worst.

## TECH-SAVVY TEAMWORK

Anne Arundel Medical Center is no stranger to technology. The hospital has been named to Hospitals & Health Network's "Most Wired" list four times because of its forward-thinking usage of technology. The hospital had utilized

LiveProcess for two years and had seen its benefit in multiple events and exercises since 2010. With a hurricane bearing down on them, the team made the decision to bring up the command center and start an event log within LiveProcess.

Jackson opened the hospital's command center and a LiveProcess event log at noon on Saturday, August 27th. Pessagno and her team had initiated a sign-up sheet the week before that dictated assignments of the hospital's leadership team to a schedule that would allow for continuous staffing of the command center. Other key players were notified via LiveProcess and included clinical staff, public relations representatives, support service people and others. The command center always had four to five hospital professionals staffing it. Pessagno and Jackson worked closely with Nursing Director Lil Banchemo, Vice President of Support & Clinical Services Jennifer Harrington, and

Chief Nursing Officer Dr. Sherry Perkins to bring all key players to the table.

This response was nothing new for the experienced team. The group had conducted drills with neighboring hospitals, such as the Annapolis Naval Clinic, and had weathered an intense snow storm that lasted more than a week the previous winter. Prior to the hurricane, the hospital experienced loss of its servers and an earthquake that shook the East Coast.

"We use LiveProcess to drill, record and respond to events. It's about getting the right people with the right resources to the right role at the table," said Pessagno.

One of the features the group finds most useful is the ability to electronically log updates and allow them to be shared by any user with access to the system. Those employees not in the command center were able to log in, see the updates, the action items and the changes, and work together

as a team to get it done – whether they were sitting in the command center or working in the hospital or out in the field. Conference bridges held every three hours were productive, as they didn't have to simply serve as recaps of everything that had taken place in the hours before the call.

Jackson utilized a tool within LiveProcess that allowed her to post available disaster inventories including battery-operated vents and other supplies crucial in a time of crisis, allowing her to share information among any hospital leader who might need it. Pessagno notes that the team enjoys being able to look up their respective roles and the associated duties involved via a checklist.

"It allows everyone to focus on their job and their duty," added Pessagno.

## MINIMAL IMPACT

AAMC's command center worked with local EMS and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Authority to coordinate community-wide preparations for a possible hurricane in the D.C. area. With many employees living across the bridge from the hospital, AAMC took internal preparations to ensure staffing would be covered and clinicians would have a place to stay in case the bridge was compromised. The staff used LiveProcess in concert with Active Staffer and Bed Board to ensure top-notch coordination of everything from supplies to leaks the hospital was experiencing in various rooms. The group had set up satellite phones but did not have to employ them. Communications were in full swing to keep all employees abreast of the possible storm and preparedness scenarios.

After experiencing fairly light impact to its metropolitan area, AAMC closed its command center on Monday, August 29 at 7 p.m. Though many employees received water damage to their homes and the hospital experienced some damage via water leaks, the overall impact to the hospital was blessedly low. A full complement of staffing was ensured throughout the response,

and only a handful of employees' jobs were disrupted, resulting in continuous and seamless hospital operations for this busy medical center.

Throughout its path, Hurricane Irene caused widespread destruction and at least 56 deaths. Monetary losses in the Caribbean were estimated to be as high as \$3.1 billion, while early damage estimates throughout the United States range from \$10 to \$15 billion. For AAMC, the impact was minimal, but the staff was prepared.

"You prepare for every potential disaster like it is actually going to happen, and you communicate," said Jackson. "That's the only way you can really prepare – and we are a communicating hospital."

### AAMC'S KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR HOSPITAL PREPAREDNESS:

- **Prepare** -- When disaster strikes, a prepared staff is vital to ensuring patient safety while maintaining quality patient care. Collaborating with other area medical facilities allows hospitals to leverage additional staff, supplies, beds, etc. and creates a larger healthcare presence in its community.
- **Notify key players** -- LiveProcess made opening the command center an efficient process via its robust notification tools, which allowed ongoing communication to all the key players.

- **Ensure continuous staffing** -- Making a plan for a hospital's leadership group to be able to cover the command center continuously during an event is vital.
- **Disrupt regular hospital operations as little as possible** -- Having tiered response systems and an efficient communication tool like LiveProcess allows the hospital to fulfill its daily mission to the community without disruption. Often times, extra people can not only take away from daily operations, but they also disrupt the efficient flow of the command center. Having the right people there is essential. For those who are on stand-by, they can be informed and ready to come in to the command center, if necessary.
- **Use technology and make it easy** -- Having an easy-to-use communication tool allows even those who haven't received extensive training to jump in and immediately start contributing.
- **Reap the benefits during survey time** -- Realize that continuously using an efficient communication process allows for better Joint Commission compliance and evaluation readiness. Rather than relying on old files and overloaded memories, complete records of drills and events show a hospital's response better than anything else.



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