Impact of Power Outage on Vaccine Storage

The following information is based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) consultations with vaccine manufacturers and commercial distributors. Current CDC websites can be viewed for more information as it becomes available.

Manufacturers have supplied telephone numbers to assist public health authorities and immunization providers in responding to provider inquiries about vaccine stored in refrigerators where power was lost. The following table lists telephone numbers and basic information about vaccine manufacturers' response to the power outage.

Manufacturer/Response

AVENTIS
Aventis has compiled a message to provide information by vaccine type for states and providers making decisions regarding the use of vaccines potentially affected by the outage. For additional information, providers may call the Aventis Power Outage Hotline at 1-800-432-2463.

GLAXOSMITHKLINE
GlaxoSmithKline has provided a "guidance packet" of vaccine-specific information for state and local public health programs to assist providers. Providers may call 1-888-825-5249 or their state immunization program for further information if necessary.

MASSACHUSETTS PUBLIC HEALTH BIOLOGICAL LABORATORIES
Questions regarding tetanus and diphtheria toxoids adsorbed vaccine for adult use manufactured by the Massachusetts Public Health Biological Laboratories should be directed to the laboratories at the following number: 1-617-983-6400.

MERCK
Merck will handle individual provider calls to make decisions regarding the use of vaccines potentially affected by the outage. Merck's National Service Center (NCS) is prepared to respond to calls from individual providers. Providers may call the NSC at 1-800-NSC-MERCK (1-800-672-6372) for guidance.

WYETH-LEDERLE
Stability studies indicate that Prevnar that has been exposed to elevated temperatures due to the power outage for less than 72 hours may retain potency for up to 6 months from the date of exposure (or until the expiration date, if that date occurs sooner than 6 months). This applies only to vaccine that was maintained in the refrigerator for the duration of the power outage and is maintained at the required temperature once power is restored.
Providers may call 1-800-99-WYETH (1-800-999-9384) for additional information for making decisions regarding

the use of vaccines that may have been affected by the outage.

Following the widespread power outage of Thursday, August 14, 2003, across states and metropolitan areas in the northeastern and Midwestern United States, these instructions were issued:
Do not open freezers and refrigerators until power is restored.

Most refrigerated vaccines are relatively stable at room temperature for limited periods of time. The vaccines of most concern are MMR and Varivax, which are sensitive to elevated temperatures. MMR may retain potency at room temperature, depending on the duration of exposure. With regard to Varivax, CDC will consult with Merck Vaccines to determine the best course of action.

Monitor temperatures; do not discard vaccines; do not administer affected vaccines until you have discussed use of these vaccines with public health authorities.

Additional recommendations include actions to take during a continued, extended loss of power and detailed instructions for preserving and maintaining refrigerated or frozen vaccines when power is restored. Review the full text of initial instructions, or for additional information, contact state or local health departments.

Most of this information is courtesy of US Government CDC. In times of an emergency, much of this material may not apply when it comes to specialized care and testing. These are guidelines to help you when that care is not available. Some of this information is very technical and difficult to understand, but hopefully someone will be available for help in treatment and understanding.

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