



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
Washington DC 20420**

IL 10-2005-003

In Reply Refer To: 119

February 11, 2005

UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH'S INFORMATION LETTER

**DELIVERY OF OUTPATIENT PRESCRIPTIONS FOLLOWING A SIGNIFICANT
WEATHER EVENT**

1. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) currently dispenses three out of every four outpatient prescriptions through the Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy (CMOP) Program, with the remaining prescriptions being dispensed locally. The CMOP Program primarily uses the United States Postal Service (USPS) for delivery of 95 percent of the estimated 45 million packages shipped annually. Other delivery contractors such as Federal Express (FedEx) and United Parcel Service (UPS) are also used under certain circumstances. The seven CMOPs each work directly through their local Post Customer Council and mail presort contractor (currently the American Parcel Express, Corporation) to continually monitor and improve the delivery of CMOP packages. CMOP packages delivered to patients located across the Nation average between 2 to 3 days from CMOP receipt to patient delivery.
2. Significant weather events such as hurricanes, flooding, and major snowstorms can disrupt the delivery of mail and packages. As the delivery of CMOP packages is essential for the seamless provision of care, CMOP Program managers and VA facility staff impacted by significant weather events work cooperatively and in partnership with USPS, as well as other package delivery contractors to ensure that disruptions in delivery of medications caused by weather events is minimized to the greatest extent possible.
3. The general plan of action in an area impacted by a significant weather event is outlined as follows:
 - a. It is post office policy to hold mail and packages that cannot be delivered to addressees due to homes that are damaged, destroyed or otherwise inaccessible. Patients may pick-up packages and mail at their local post office, or other pick-up locations designated by USPS, for up to 10 to 14 days following a weather event.
 - b. After 10 to 14 days, local post offices return packages held for pickup to the return addresses on those packages. Those addresses are usually the local VA medical centers. Individual patients whose packages are returned to the medical center need to be contacted promptly by medical center staff so arrangements can be made for delivery or pick-up of the packages.

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c. Patients should be encouraged by VA medical centers (using VA staff, or local mass media, if appropriate) to contact their local post office to pick-up mail and to arrange for a temporary or permanent forwarding address.

d. Patients need to be encouraged by local VA medical center staff to contact their VA facility with any new prescription forwarding address and/or contact information.

e. CMOP staff works with USPS to get periodic updates on USPS delivery status in the affected geographic areas. The status reports are shared with affected VA facility pharmacy managers as soon as they become available.

f. If necessary, CMOP staff works with other package delivery vendors to develop alternate means of ensuring delivery of packages as circumstances allow, including possible return of those packages to CMOP and reshipment via USPS if needed.

4. Inquiries. Questions regarding this Information Letter may be addressed to Network Program Support (10NB) at (202) 273-5870.

S/ Jonathan B. Perlin, MD, PhD, MSHA, FACP
Acting Under Secretary for Health

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