Hurricane Irene Spurs Emergency Deliveries of Medical Oxygen to Patients in Storm Path

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 30, 2011 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- From the Carolinas to New England, durable medical equipment providers spent much of the past three or four days preparing their customers for Hurricane Irene, reports the American Association for Homecare. Of particular concern to the companies are people who require supplemental medical oxygen, which is often supplied by an electric concentrator. During a power outage or evacuation, having an adequate back-up supply is essential to the health of the oxygen users, many of whom are Medicare beneficiaries.

Homecare Concepts in Farmingdale, New York has been delivering oxygen to patients who have lost power. The company itself lost power and employees have been coordinating care and service via cell phone to the more than 100 patients without power in the New York City area. “Those who were without power had additional gas [oxygen] cylinders delivered to them,” said Joe Candiano, operations supervisor at Homecare Concepts. “It wasn’t always easy as the guys were dodging downed trees and power lines to get to homes. This is not just a nine to five job.”

Mark Richardson at Home MediService in **Havre de Grace, Maryland**, said his company received at least 58 Hurricane Irene-related calls over the weekend and the company made two dozen trips to visit oxygen users on Sunday alone. "Many of our patients were very impressed that their oxygen company would take the time to call them and make sure they had adequate back-up. Many were very thankful that we went out in that storm to make sure that they weren't at risk."

EME Medical Equipment in **Ephrata, Pennsylvania** put all delivery, clinical, and management staff on alert for the weekend and lined up gas and liquid oxygen supplies. Ted Gress, a registered respiratory therapist and operations manager at the company, said high winds and heavy rains produced power outages over the '/>"/>

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