

feature



Ready for **anything**

Distribution partners collaborate to synchronize
emergency preparedness efforts



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re you interested in the efficiencies and cost savings offered by stockless or low-unit-of-measure (LUM) inventory models, but worried about getting stuck without enough inventory during emergencies?

Healthcare providers who have adopted low-inventory models say that service disruptions are preventable, even during snowstorms, disasters, and other events that impede deliveries and increase product usage. The key, they say, is to work closely with your distributor to put the right processes and contingencies in place in advance.

Two main preparation areas:

Data and technology

- Use utilization reports to precisely determine inventory minimums and maximums. Usage rates can be analyzed by month, week, day, and even by clinical department.
- Agree upon and preload hypothetical or conditional orders to be used if communications are down.
- Set up weather alerts on computers, cell phones, and email systems to notify staff if inventory reserves need to be increased several days before a storm actually hits.
- Employ generators and cell/satellite phones for backup power and communications to keep materials management staff operational if city grids fail during extreme weather.

Contingency planning

- Map out alternate delivery routes for vendor partners to use in case of detours, road closures, or hazardous road conditions.
- Agree on automatic substitution lists or pre-approved alternate products to avoid shortages of critical items.
- Consider contracting with your distributor for reserved inventories. These products are set aside for your organization, guaranteeing available warehouse stock regardless of the emergency scenario.
- Keep emergency contact lists up-to-date, including all city, county, state, and federal emergency response agency contact information for easy reference.



Could this happen in your area?

Scenario: A strong winter storm is projected to blanket the area with up to three feet of snow. Power outages and impassable roads are expected to make deliveries difficult or impossible for several days. Your facility is stockless and maintains only about two days' inventory for most items.

Response: Your distributor receives weather alerts about the threat and immediately begins preparing an early delivery. Usage data is employed to determine appropriate quantity increases in case roads are closed for an extended period. The delivery is made before the storm hits.

Open communication between supply partners is the best way to avoid being caught off guard. Providers should know how their vendor partners will respond during emergencies and precisely what the vendors' inventory capacity is. Similarly, distributors must know their customers' item and order preferences for any given situation.

Proper response planning allows providers to focus on pa-

tient care, trusting that their vendors can and will deliver in times of need. "Over the years, we have always worked closely with our providers to ensure their daily deliveries," says Lou Andreozzi, Operations Manager for The Claffin Company. "We proactively manage our transportation regarding impending adverse weather conditions and our customers have come to anticipate and expect this attention, as they should."