



Medicare Fee-for-Service (FFS) Response to the 2018 Alaska Earthquake

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Note: We revised this article on April 18, 2019, to advise providers and suppliers that the Public Health Emergency and the Section 1135 waiver authority for Alaska expired on February 27, 2019. All other information is unchanged.

PROVIDER TYPES AFFECTED

This MLN Matters® Special Edition Article is intended for providers and suppliers who submit claims to Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) for services provided to Medicare beneficiaries, who were affected by the 2018 earthquake in the State of Alaska.

PROVIDER INFORMATION AVAILABLE

Pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, President Trump declared that, as a result of the effects of the 2018 Alaska earthquake, a major disaster exists in the State of Alaska. On December 3, 2018, Secretary Azar of the Department of Health & Human Services declared that a public health emergency exists in the State of Alaska retroactive to November 30, 2018, and authorized waivers and modifications under §1135 of the Social Security Act.

Also, the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) authorized waivers under §1812(f) of the Social Security Act for the State of Alaska retroactive to November 30, 2018, for those people who are evacuated, transferred, or otherwise dislocated as a result of the effect of the earthquake.

Under Section 1135 or 1812(f) of the Social Security Act, CMS has issued several blanket waivers in the impacted geographical areas of the State of Alaska. These waivers will prevent gaps in access to care for beneficiaries impacted by the emergency. Providers do not need to apply for an individual waiver if a blanket waiver has been issued. Providers can request an individual Section 1135 waiver by following the instructions available at <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/Downloads/Requesting-an-1135-Waiver-Updated-11-16-2016.pdf>.

The most current waiver information is available at <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/EPRO/Current-Emergencies/Current-Emergencies-page.html>. See the Background section of this article for more details.

The Public Health Emergency declaration and Social Security Act waivers including the Section 1135 waiver authority expired on February 27, 2019.

BACKGROUND

Section 1135 and Section 1812(f) Waivers

As a result of the aforementioned declaration, CMS has instructed the MACs as follows:

1. CR 6451 (Transmittal 1784, Publication 100-04) issued on July 31, 2009, applies to items and services furnished to Medicare beneficiaries within the State of Alaska from November 30, 2018, for the duration of the emergency. In accordance with CR6451, use of the “DR” condition code and the “CR” modifier are mandatory on claims for items and services for which Medicare payment is conditioned on the presence of a “formal waiver” including, but not necessarily limited to, waivers granted under either Section 1135 or Section 1812(f) of the Act.
2. The most current information is available at <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/EPRO/Current-Emergencies/Current-Emergencies-page.html>. Medicare FFS Questions & Answers (Q&As) posted on the waivers and flexibilities page at <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/EPRO/Resources/Waivers-and-flexibilities.html>, and also referenced below are applicable for items and services furnished to Medicare beneficiaries within the State of Alaska. These Q&As are displayed in two files:
 - One file addresses policies and procedures that are applicable without any Section 1135 or other formal waiver. These policies are always applicable in any kind of emergency or disaster, including the current emergency in the State of Alaska.
 - Another file addresses policies and procedures that are applicable only with approved Section 1135 waivers or, when applicable, approved Section 1812(f) waivers. These Q&As are applicable for approved Section 1135 blanket waivers and approved individual 1135 waivers requested by providers and are effective November 30, 2018, for the State of Alaska.

In both cases, the links below will open the most current document. The date included in the document filename will change as new information is added, or existing information is revised.

- a) Q&As applicable **without any Section 1135** or other formal waiver are available at https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/Downloads/Consolidated_Medicare_FFS_Emergency_QsAs.pdf.
- b) Q&As applicable **only with a Section 1135** waiver or, when applicable, a Section 1812(f) waiver, are available at <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/Downloads/MedicareFFS-EmergencyQsAs1135Waiver.pdf>.

Blanket Waivers Issued by CMS

Under the authority of Section 1135 (or, as noted below, Section 1812(f)), CMS has issued blanket waivers in the affected areas of **the State of Alaska**. Individual facilities do not need to apply for the following approved blanket waivers:

Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs)

- Section 1812(f): This waiver of the requirement for a 3-day prior hospitalization for coverage of a SNF stay provides temporary emergency coverage of SNF services without a qualifying hospital stay, for those people who are evacuated, transferred, or otherwise dislocated as a result of the effect of the earthquake in the State of Alaska. In addition, for certain beneficiaries who recently exhausted their SNF benefits, it authorizes renewed SNF coverage without first having to start a new benefit period (Blanket waiver for all impacted facilities).
- 42 CFR 483.20: Waiver provides relief to SNFs on the timeframe requirements for Minimum Data Set assessments and transmission (Blanket waiver for all impacted facilities).

Home Health Agencies

- 42 CFR 484.20(c)(1): This waiver provides relief to Home Health Agencies on the timeframes related to OASIS Transmission (Blanket waiver for all impacted agencies).
- To ensure the correct processing of home health disaster related claims, Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) are allowed to extend the auto-cancellation date of Requests for Anticipated Payment (RAPs).

Critical Access Hospitals

This action waives the requirements that Critical Access Hospitals limit the number of beds to 25, and that the length of stay be limited to 96 hours. (Blanket waiver for all impacted hospitals)

Housing Acute Care Patients In Excluded Distinct Part Units

CMS has determined it is appropriate to issue a blanket waiver to IPPS hospitals that, as a result of the earthquake in the State of Alaska, need to house acute care inpatients in excluded distinct part units, where the distinct part unit's beds are appropriate for acute care inpatient. The IPPS hospital should bill for the care and annotate the patient's medical record to indicate the patient is an acute care inpatient being housed in the excluded unit because of capacity issues related to the earthquake in the State of Alaska. (Blanket waiver for all IPPS hospitals located in the affected areas that need to use distinct part beds for acute care patients as a result of the earthquake.)

Care for Excluded Inpatient Psychiatric Unit Patients in the Acute Care Unit of a Hospital

CMS has determined it is appropriate to issue a blanket waiver to IPPS and other acute care hospitals with excluded distinct part inpatient psychiatric units that, as a result of the earthquake in the State of Alaska, need to relocate inpatients from the excluded distinct part psychiatric unit to an acute care bed and unit. The hospital should continue to bill for inpatient psychiatric services under the inpatient psychiatric facility prospective payment system for such patients and annotate the medical record to indicate the patient is a

psychiatric inpatient being cared for in an acute care bed because of capacity or other exigent circumstances related to the earthquake. This waiver may be utilized where the hospital's acute care beds are appropriate for psychiatric patients and the staff and environment are conducive to safe care. For psychiatric patients, this includes assessment of the acute care bed and unit location to ensure those patients at risk of harm to self and others are safely cared for.

Care for Excluded Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit Patients in the Acute Care Unit of a Hospital

CMS has determined it is appropriate to issue a blanket waiver to IPPS and other acute care hospitals with excluded distinct part inpatient rehabilitation units that, as a result of the earthquake in the State of Alaska, need to relocate inpatients from the excluded distinct part rehabilitation unit to an acute care bed and unit. The hospital should continue to bill for inpatient rehabilitation services under the inpatient rehabilitation facility prospective payment system for such patients and annotate the medical record to indicate the patient is a rehabilitation inpatient being cared for in an acute care bed because of capacity or other exigent circumstances related to the earthquake. This waiver may be utilized where the hospital's acute care beds are appropriate for providing care to rehabilitation patients, and such patients continue to receive intensive rehabilitation services.

Emergency Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies for Medicare Beneficiaries Impacted by an Emergency or Disaster

As a result of the earthquake in the State of Alaska, CMS has determined it is appropriate to issue a blanket waiver to suppliers of Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies (DMEPOS) where DMEPOS are lost, destroyed, irreparably damaged, or otherwise rendered unusable. Under this waiver, the face-to-face requirement, a new physician's order, and new medical necessity documentation are not required for replacement. Suppliers must still include a narrative description on the claim explaining the reason why the equipment must be replaced and are reminded to maintain documentation indicating that the DMEPOS were lost, destroyed, irreparably damaged or otherwise rendered unusable as a result of the earthquake.

For more information refer to the Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies for Medicare Beneficiaries Impacted by an Emergency or Disaster fact sheet at <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/Downloads/Emergency-DME-Beneficiaries-Hurricanes.pdf>.

Medicare Advantage Plan or other Medicare Health Plan Beneficiaries

CMS reminds suppliers that Medicare beneficiaries enrolled in a Medicare Advantage or other Medicare Health Plans should contact their plan directly to find out how it replaces DMEPOS damaged or lost in an emergency or disaster. Beneficiaries who do not have their plan's contact information can contact 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) for assistance.

Replacement Prescription Fills

Medicare payment may be permitted for replacement prescription fills (for a quantity up to the amount originally dispensed) of covered Part B drugs in circumstances where dispensed medication has been lost or otherwise rendered unusable by damage due to the disaster or emergency.

Requesting an 1135 Waiver

Information for requesting an 1135 waiver, when a blanket waiver hasn't been approved, can be found at <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/Downloads/Requesting-an-1135-Waiver-Updated-11-16-2016.pdf>.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you have questions, your MACs may have more information. Find their website at <http://go.cms.gov/MAC-website-list>.

Providers may also want to review the CMS Emergency and Preparedness webpage at <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/EPRO/EPRO-Home.html>.

Providers may also want to view the Survey and Certification Frequently Asked Questions at <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/SurveyCertEmergPrep/index.html>.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date of Change	Description
April 18, 2019	We revised this article to advise providers and suppliers that the Public Health Emergency and the Section 1135 waiver authority for Alaska expired on February 27, 2019.
December 6, 2018	Initial article released.

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