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Emergency department data show 3 deaths related to June 29 windstorm

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Bureau for Public Health has completed a review of data received from hospital emergency departments (EDs) regarding the June 29 windstorm indicating 3 fatalities occurred in WV as a result of the storm and its aftermath.

State Health Officer and Commissioner for Public Health Dr. Marian Swinker says, "The Bureau's Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services worked closely with emergency departments across West Virginia to track illness, injuries and deaths associated with the June 29 Derecho wind storm. Our evaluation of the data received from the EDs indicated burns and inhalation illness from individuals using generators in closed environments, gastroenteritis for individuals eating spoiled foods and heat-related illness. Further, the investigation indicated 3 deaths in West Virginia EDs were attributed to the June 29 Derecho."

Deaths occurred in Pocahontas, Webster and Randolph counties as a result of (1) carbon monoxide poisoning, (1) heat-related illness, and (1) delayed access to health care.

Dr. Swinker says "West Virginia hospitals did an outstanding job capturing and reporting this much needed data to the state. Our hospitals are a tremendous asset and partner to Public Health. The data collected will help us develop prevention messages that can help save lives in the future. While not all storm-related deaths or injuries are preventable, the data serve as a reminder for all of us to be better prepared for the next major event or disaster in West Virginia. Preparedness can begin with a simple family disaster kit as suggested by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention."

A family disaster kit will contain items such as drinking water, nonperishable food, flashlight, batteries, first aid kit, medications (and a list of all medications), battery-operated radio, emergency contact information, blankets, cell phone, extra cash, personal hygiene items and a plan for one's pets.

For more information on making a disaster plan and disaster kit go to <http://emergency.cdc.gov/preparedness/kit/disasters/>. You will also find information available at www.wvdhhr.org/healthprep.