

Lab-Specific Severe Weather Preparedness

MIT is monitoring the progress of Hurricane Irene. Hurricane Irene has the potential to generate high winds and heavy rain in the Boston metro area. Although MIT has weathered countless Nor'easters and other storms, appropriate preparation is still important. MIT Facilities, Housing, Campus Activities, Events, EHS, SEMO and other departments are preparing our campus for potentially disruptive conditions that may result from this event. In the meantime, laboratories and other research and work areas may have localized concerns relative to preparing for Hurricane Irene. The following are some immediate steps that may be taken to help stabilize operations, particularly in laboratory settings:

- 1) Given the arrival of many new researchers, ensure laboratory contact lists are updated and shared.
- 2) Experimenters should plan to shut down potentially hazardous operations. Everyone is discouraged from working in the lab during the hurricane.
- 3) Everyone should be aware of "backup power" limitations in their buildings. The emergency generators in most academic-research buildings on campus provide only minimal power (e.g., for emergency egress) and are not designed to keep general lab equipment running. If you do have equipment running on an Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS), realize there may be a delay of a few seconds before the UPS activates. If possible, reschedule any experiments that involve continuous data acquisition.
- 4) Local department servers. IS & T backs up files stored on MIT's Andrew File System (AFS or what most know as MIT's computer network system), and has both local and remote backup. Some lab groups, however, operate local servers. Check with your Department's Network/System Administrator to determine how the system is backed up. Back up any locally stored files.
- 5) MIT VoIP or traditional ISDN phones may/may not be on backup power. If backup power exists, it may only be for a short time. In the event of a power outage, the MIT VoIP and ISDN phones are not likely to work. While a cell phone may function during a power outage, there is the potential for these lines to be jammed during an emergency. Analog phones may remain functional provided telephone lines are not down, and tel/data closets are not water damaged.
- 6) Flammables storage refrigerators: If unopened, flammables storage refrigerators can retain their coolness for several hours following a power outage. Minimizing activity that requires going into the refrigerators will help mitigate the effects of a power outage.
- 7) Freezers: see guidance for "Flammables storage refrigerators".
- 8) Cooling water systems. CUP's chilled water system serves the majority if not all of campus. Recirculating pumps, however, are locally run. Recirculating pumps not on backup power can create a loss in cooling capacity if a power outage extends beyond a few hours. Since it's difficult to precisely pinpoint where storm damage could occur or if there will be a loss of power, during the projected storm event, please make every effort not to run experiments which require a cooling jacket.

9) Flood-prone areas. Custodial Services and Repair and Maintenance staff from Facilities are on call to deal with localized floods, but several concurrent flood reports could overwhelm resources. If you work in a location that is prone to flooding, contact your Department's Facilities Manager about setting up sump pumps and local portable generators. Relocate any floor-level chemical and chemical-waste storage.

10) Roof top experiments or equipment should be checked for anchoring and integrity prior to the storm.

11) Refrain from rooftop, penthouse, balcony or other outdoor elevated activity during the storm.

Since publicity and awareness surrounding the weather forecast is fairly high, this may be a good opportunity to prepare for many of the issues presented above and to develop a plan to continue or quickly recover your operations during any outage. Preparedness and planning is the antidote to anxiety. Please check in with your areas in a responsible and suitable way to ensure we are preparing our lab and other areas as prudently as possible. Facilities and EHS are available to provide assistance. Call 3-4948 if you require assistance.