



Practice Policy: Refrigeration of Drugs, Vaccines, and Biologics Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is an update to the Refrigeration Policy necessary?

Pharmacy practitioners are the largest provider of vaccines against influenza and COVID-19 and stock large quantities of these vaccines. It is anticipated that pharmacies' role in the provision of publicly funded vaccines will continue to increase. As stewards of the vaccine supply and to minimize the loss of publicly funded vaccines entrusted to them, pharmacy practitioners must be able to maintain the cold chain, and this includes being adequately prepared to manage power interruptions that can lead to temperature excursions.

2. Does the policy apply to all medications requiring refrigeration?

While the policy applies to all medications that must be refrigerated, there are additional requirements around maintaining and monitoring the temperature that apply to Public Health vaccines.

3. Can we meet the requirements of this policy by moving our vaccines before a weather event to Public Health, the local hospital, or another pharmacy as we always have?

Having a plan to move vaccines in anticipation of a power outage does not meet the requirements of the policy as many power outages are not anticipated and occur at times where moving them is not feasible.

4. How long does the temperature need to be maintained?

For Public Health vaccines, the temperature needs to be maintained for the duration of the power outage and must not require human intervention for the first 24 hours.

5. Do we need to purchase new equipment?

If the current equipment you are using at your pharmacy does not meet the requirements of the policy, it may be necessary to purchase new equipment. Options could include a:

- refrigerator that maintains the temperature without a power source
- battery backup
- generator
- combination of the above



6. What does “*equipped with a method to notify staff of temperature excursions in real time when the pharmacy is open*” mean?”

There needs to be a method in place that notifies the staff when the refrigerator, freezer, or environment is out of range. (e.g., If the door is accidentally left open at 1:00pm, staff need to be alerted to this so that it can be corrected.)

7. The policy enables electronic temperature logging. Does this mean that we no longer have to manually document our temperature readings for public health vaccines?

The NSCP requirement for temperature logging applies to all drugs requiring refrigeration. Public Health requirements for vaccine storage may differ from NSCP requirements. Please consult with Public Health for details specific to public health vaccines.