



WREMAC

From: Big Lakes, Southwestern, and Wyoming-Erie Regional EMS Councils and Western Region Emergency Medical Advisory Committee (WREMAC)

To: All WNY EMS Providers and Agencies

Re: Regional EMS & Healthcare System Capacity Advisory

Background and Context

The Buffalo and Western New York healthcare system is currently operating beyond capacity. Hospitals throughout the Buffalo area are experiencing exceptionally high volumes of acutely ill patients. Those volumes have resulted in significant delays for patients who seek care in the emergency department (ED). Many EDs are boarding dozens of admitted patients and have many more in waiting rooms awaiting care.

Unfortunately, the system constraints have resulted in many cases of ambulances waiting hours for patient offload, rendering them unavailable for 911 response. The overall impact is reduced system reliability, increased reliance on mutual aid, and an extreme strain on the already fragile EMS infrastructure.

Critical System Factors

- This is not due to an EMS workforce shortage or lack of ambulances.
- All Buffalo area hospitals are at capacity for admissions, with admitted patients housed in emergency departments until inpatient beds become available.
- This is not a brief surge and will not resolve quickly. Hospitals are expected to operate near or above capacity for the forthcoming weeks, even in best-case scenarios.
- Hospitals are treating a higher proportion of acutely ill patients, prolonging length of stay and further slowing patient throughput.
- Operating above capacity limits patient movement within facilities and prevents transfers between hospitals.
- With all hospitals full, there is no capacity to load balance patients regionally.

The current respiratory illness environment, including elevated influenza and other respiratory viruses, is a major contributor to current conditions. State and national surveillance data indicate ongoing high activity and increasing trends in respiratory virus circulation (see NYS Department of Health and CDC FluView for current activity levels):

- New York State respiratory virus activity:
https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/respiratory_viruses/activity/2025-2026/
- CDC FluView influenza surveillance:
<https://www.cdc.gov/fluview/surveillance/2025-week-52.html>

Call to Action for EMS Agencies

We encourage all EMS agencies to proactively communicate with your communities and partner organizations about current conditions and appropriate care expectations. Clear and consistent public messaging will support system resilience, preserve emergency resources, and protect patients. Please share this information through your social media channels and all available outlets.

Patient and Public Expectations

To assist system capacity and support community health:

- Follow CDC and NYS Department of Health guidance on influenza and respiratory illness precautions.
- Use telehealth options for non-emergency care, when appropriate. Check with your insurance for available telehealth options or follow the QR codes below for telemedicine services from UBMD and Catholic Health.
- If unwell, practice masking, physical distancing, and staying home when possible.
- Consider delivery and / or rideshare services (e.g., Uber, Lyft, Doordash, Amazon Pharmacy, etc.) for medications or groceries as needed.
- **Local influenza activity remains elevated, contributing to patient volumes.** Plan for extended wait times when seeking care in hospital emergency departments.



Andrew Knoell, Chair
Big Lakes REMSCO



Timothy Carlson, Chair
Southwestern REMSCO



Bryan Brauner, Chair
Wyoming-Erie REMSCO



Dr. Michael O'Brien, Chair
WREMAC

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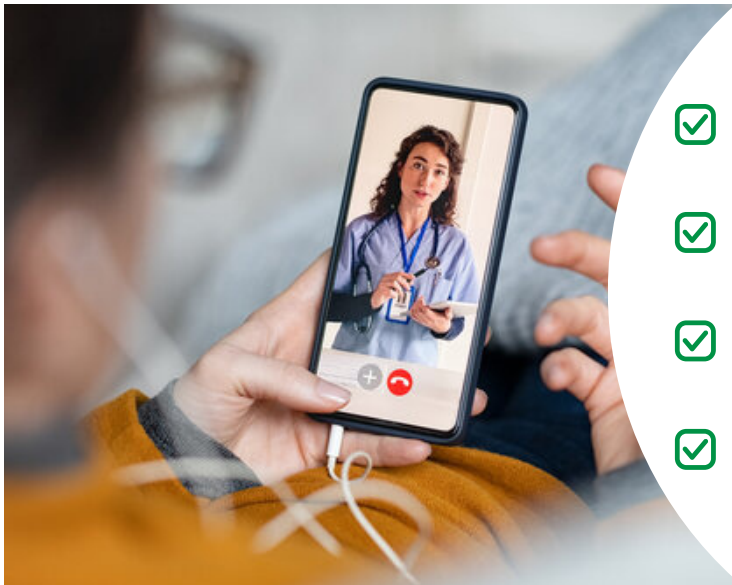
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