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Tips for Keeping Medical Records Safe During Catastrophe

Federal law requires health care providers to keep copies of those records safely off site, but is that happening, and is it enough?

Doctors at Tallahassee Memorial have seen nearly 200 evacuees since the storm.

Dr. John Pope says he has no way to access their records and none of his patients brought any with them.

Dr. John Pope says, "Most of it comes from the patients themselves. We have to rely on that and the medications that they bring to kind of deduce what kind of problems they really have."

Tallahassee Memorial keeps copies of all its medical records at another secret location in town, off-site copies required by federal HIPAA laws as of this spring.

Capital Regional Medical Center keeps its backup copies even farther away in Orlando should this area be devastated.

Shanta Thompson, CRMC medical records director, says, "We have eight tapes that run continuously at one time that so if anything were to happen we would be able to access those tapes, get the patient records and get them to them in case of an event like New Orleans."


Tallahassee attorney Leonard Dietzen specializes in HIPAA law. He says hospitals aren't the only ones required to keep these duplicate copies; dentists, pharmacists, insurance companies, all of them he says should take note of what is happening in Louisiana and Mississippi.

Leonard Dietzen says, "We learned that having a plan in place is nothing unless everyone knows how to implement it. Apparently, they weren't ready. Many, this is a wakeup call for a lot of health care providers."

Everyone suggests everyone, especially those with medical conditions, get a copy of their medical records and be sure to take them with you should you ever evacuate.

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