NEW YORK STATE
DEPARTMENT of
FINANCIAL SERVICES

Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor

Benjamin M. Lawsky
Superintendent

Insurance Circular Letter No.4 (2015)
March 6, 2015

TO: **All accident and health insurers, Article 43 corporations, licensed Public Health Law Article 44 health maintenance organizations, and municipal cooperative health benefit plans (collectively, "addressees").**

RE: **Disaster Planning, Preparedness and Response**

STATUTORY REFERENCES: Insurance Law Sections 308 and 1109 and Articles 44 and 47, and Financial Services Law Sections 202 and 306.

Summary

This circular letter sets forth the standards expected of all addressees noted above in planning and preparing for, and responding to, disasters in New York State. To that end, this letter describes the role of the New York State Disaster Coalition and the organization and operation of the Insurance Emergency Operations Center ("IEOC").

The letter also describes the data reports and plans (Business Continuity Plan Questionnaires, Disaster Response Plan Questionnaires, and Disaster Response Plans) that various health insurers are expected to provide the Department of Financial Services ("Department") before a disaster strikes, so that the Department can assist in promptly organizing industry response to a disaster.

Further, the letter describes the part played by insurance company Disaster Liaisons in staffing the IEOC and responding to Department requests for information.

Finally, the letter describes the post disaster reporting process (Post Disaster Data and Loss Statistics), and confidentiality of reports provided to the Department.

This circular letter repeals and replaces Circular Letter No. 3 (2014). Disaster planning, preparedness, and response for life insurers and property/casualty insurers are covered by separate circular letters.

Discussion

A. Organization of this Circular Letter

The following table sets forth the topics covered in this circular letter.

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B. The New York State Insurance Disaster Coalition and Insurance Emergency Operations Center

When an emergency or disaster occurs, the Department provides the Governor and the State Office of Emergency Management ("SOEM") with critical information regarding the number and extent of property losses, as well as other damage assessments. Based on this information, the Governor determines whether and when to request a federal disaster declaration and how to prioritize the deployment of state assets.

The insurance community, including the property, life, and health sectors, has been identified as a key resource in providing early assessments of damages arising from natural or man-made disasters. Insurers play an important role in quantifying the magnitude of losses - insured and uninsured - and in determining both the degree and duration of insurer response to losses. Accordingly, all entities to which this circular letter is directed are expected to assist the Department in obtaining necessary information before, during, and after disasters strike.

An integral part of the Insurance Disaster Coalition response to any disaster is the IEOC, which will be staffed by selected insurance industry disaster liaisons and representatives of the Department and will coordinate disaster response.

The IEOC will be activated at the direction of the Superintendent of Financial Services ("Superintendent"), in accordance with the nature and extent of the event. Where possible, this determination will be made in conjunction with the Department's disaster coalition partners.

C. Before a Disaster Strikes

Sections 1(a) and (b) apply to all addressees of this circular letter except municipal cooperative health benefit plans.

1) Disaster Response Plan and Questionnaire

Each addressee of this letter should incorporate the New York State Insurance Disaster Coalition procedures into its own Disaster Response Plan. Since the New York State Insurance Disaster Coalition procedures and the IEOC continue to be integral parts of the industry's response to any disaster in New York State, the submission of each insurer's Disaster Response Plan is necessary to maintain the effectiveness and accuracy of information used by the Disaster Coalition in the event of a future disaster.

a) Disaster Response Plan

The Disaster Response Plan should describe how each addressee intends to provide its policyholders with the resources needed to recover from a disaster. To this end, a Disaster Response Plan should at a minimum detail what preparations the entity has made, where applicable, with respect to the following:

- Board of Directors support for a Disaster Response Plan;
- Appropriate emergency response training of company personnel;
- Plans for suitable expansion of claims handling capacity in a variety of disaster scenarios, including provisions to cover:
  - adequate personnel;
  - adequate IT/infrastructure for increased volume (e.g.: adequate capacity on toll free hotline systems)
  - catastrophe response team availability; and
  - access to disaster areas and personnel identification.
- Testing of the Disaster Response Plan; and
- Incorporation of the role of insurance company disaster liaisons and their interaction with the Department.

Please note that more detailed guidance about creating a Disaster Response Plan is provided in the attached appendix.

By June 1, 2015, each company must submit a Disaster Response Plan to the Department. Entities must provide their completed Disaster Response Plan to the Department via the Department's Portal Application or in hard copy. No other format will be accepted. If the company chooses to submit the Disaster Response Plan in

hard copy, it should mail the plan to the Department at State of New York Department of Financial Services, Disaster Response Coordinator, One State Street, New York, NY 10004.

If the current Disaster Response Plan is the same as the most recent Disaster Response Plan filed with the Department, please submit a statement indicating that the previously filed plan is still in effect. The statement should also indicate the names and NAIC numbers of the companies covered by the plan and the date it was submitted. The statement should be submitted as an attachment via the Department's Portal or in hard copy.

For orderly processing of files attached in the Department's Portal, files that are either new Disaster Response Plans or statements indicating that the previously filed plan is still in effect should be named "**Disaster Response Plan**."

b) Disaster Response Plan Questionnaire

The Disaster Response Plan Questionnaire is not to be used in lieu of an addressee's own Disaster Response Plan. Rather, the requested information is to be included as part of each entity's plan.

By June 1, 2015, the Disaster Response Plan Questionnaire must be submitted to the Department via the Department's Portal Application or in hard copy. No other format will be accepted.

In the Disaster Response Plan Questionnaire, each entity will be providing the Department with the name of its designated disaster liaison(s), along with that person's telephone and cell phone number(s) (for both business and after business hours), email address, and/or pager number, if applicable. Any change in contact information should be reported immediately to the Department by submitting an updated Disaster Response Plan Questionnaire.

The Department strongly encourages companies to provide the information via the Department's Portal Application. The Disaster Response Plan Questionnaire electronic template, and instructions for its completion and submission, can be found on the Department's website at:

http://www.dfs.ny.gov/insurance/circltr/cl**2015**_dpr.htm

Please note that if a company chooses to provide the current Disaster Response Plan Questionnaire in electronic form, it must be submitted as an attachment via the Department's Portal.

If a company instead chooses to submit the questionnaire in hard copy, it can contact the Department to request a hard copy of the questionnaire at State of New York Department of Financial Services, Disaster Response Coordinator, One State Street, New York, NY 10004.

2) Business Continuity Plan Questionnaire

To assure the Department that each addressee has taken steps to put in place a Business Continuity Plan that would reasonably ensure that the recovery of critical business processes could take place in the event of a disaster, each addressee is required to complete the Business Continuity Plan Questionnaire and attest to the accuracy of the answers provided.

By June 1, 2015, the Business Continuity Plan Questionnaire must be submitted to the Department via the Department's Portal Application or in hard copy. No other format will be accepted.

The Business Continuity Plan Questionnaire electronic template, and instructions for its completion and submission, can be found on the Department's website at:

http://www.dfs.ny.gov/insurance/circltr/cl**2015**_dpr.htm

Please note that if a company chooses to provide the current Business Continuity Plan Questionnaire in electronic form, it must be submitted as an attachment via the Department's Portal.

If a company instead chooses to submit the questionnaire in hard copy, it can contact the Department to request a hard copy of the questionnaire at State of New York Department of Financial Services, Disaster Response Coordinator, One State Street, New York, NY 10004.

D. Operations During a Disaster

1) Insurance Company Disaster Liaisons

Upon the Department's activation of its IEOC, the Superintendent may activate designated insurance company disaster liaisons representing several of the largest underwriters in the emergency or disaster area. Disaster liaisons will be contacted based upon information submitted in the Disaster Response Plan Questionnaire.

Subsequently, disaster liaisons should be prepared to participate in the State's Disaster Response Plan as follows:

- A teleconference of the selected disaster liaisons will be held, where possible, following the occurrence of a disaster – and prior to the activation of the Department's IEOC – to discuss the magnitude of the disaster and the scope of activation plans.

- Upon activation of the IEOC, disaster liaisons or their designees will be expected to staff the IEOC at either -the Department's offices in Albany or those in New York City.

- The Department will provide a fully-equipped IEOC for use by disaster liaisons at one of the aforementioned locations. Included are analog data and voice telephone lines, along with videoconferencing links to the SOEM emergency operations center.

- The Department will continue to coordinate communications among company and association contacts through ongoing teleconference calls to: plan staffing of the IEOC for the actual or threatened (as in the case of hurricanes) emergency; individually discuss with each insurer's liaison the company's catastrophe operations; individually review each insurer's Disaster Response Plan; and discuss catastrophe operations and emerging issues.

- Disaster liaisons may be expected to remain on duty at the IEOC as determined by the Superintendent acting in consultation with coalition partners.

2) Liaison Duties and Responsibilities

Insurance company disaster liaisons should:

- Have a qualified back up. Both persons preferably should be members of the entity's catastrophe team or manager-level employees- who are familiar with company protocols and have access to critical information.

- Provide coverage data and loss statistics as requested by the Department.

- Transmit information about the disaster from the insurance industry to emergency response officials and other industry representatives.

- Be authorized and knowledgeable about company internal information systems and sources and authorized to access such systems so that applicable, timely information can be provided to SOEM/New York City Office of Emergency Management, and other emergency responders via the Department.

- Be prepared to remain on duty during the hours when the IEOC is operating, normally from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., or for such time periods as necessary to assist with the effective management of the disaster. Depending on the level of the disaster, this may be a seven-day-per-week commitment.

E. After a Disaster

Post Disaster Coverage Data and Loss Statistics

After an emergency or disaster the Department will contact disaster liaisons, as needed, who will be required to provide the Department specific statistics about insured losses. These statistics will be periodically updated on an as-needed basis, but not less than monthly.

Reports will be consolidated by Department staff for submission to SOEM and the Governor's office.

F. Communications Network

Insurance industry representatives of the New York State Insurance Disaster Coalition are requested to provide the Department with Internet links to not-for-profit websites that are beneficial to the public before, during, and after a disaster.

Conclusion

This circular letter endeavors to assist the health insurance industry in planning and preparing for, and responding to disasters that may befall the citizens and policyholders of New York State. Your cooperation in furnishing timely and accurate responses is essential to the success of the New York State Insurance Disaster Coalition, and is appreciated by the Department and the people of New York State.

Questions concerning any aspect of this circular letter should be directed to the Disaster Response Coordinator, by phone at (212) 480-4702, by mail to the New York State Department of Financial Services, Disaster Response Coordinator, One State Street, New York, NY 10004, or by e-mail to predis@dfs.ny.gov.

Very truly yours,

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Benjamin M. Lawsky
Superintendent

Appendix

Additional Guidance on Creating a Disaster Response Plan

HEALTH INSURERS

The Disaster Response Plan (**Plan)** is a separate document from a company's business continuity and disaster recovery plans and should be an operational document indicating the order in which actions will be taken to assure that resources are made available to policyholders in a timely manner. If your **Plan** provides affirmative answers to the following questions, it generally will meet the Department's standards for an acceptable **Plan**.

Your **Plan** should describe how you intend to provide your members and subscribers, as well as providers, with the resources they will need to recover from a disaster.

Management Oversight:

1. Does the Company have a **Plan**?

2. Is it a written **Plan**?

3. Has the **Plan** been reviewed and approved by:
   a) Senior Management?
   b) Board of Directors or a committee thereof?

4. Has a resolution:
   a) been adopted by resolution of the Board of Directors attesting to the approval of the **Plan**?
   b) if the answer to a) is "yes", has the resolution been submitted to the Department as evidence of the board's approval?

5. Has Management identified additional resources that will be needed during a disaster? (For example, telephones, server capacity and staff.)

6. Has Management analyzed its ability to provide the financial resources necessary to meet the cost of the additional resources that will be needed?

7. Is a person/titled position named as being responsible for activating the **Plan** after a disaster is declared?

8. Is a person/titled position named as being responsible for monitoring the **Plan**?

9. Is a person/titled position named as being responsible for terminating the **Plan** following a disaster?

General Information:

1. Does the **Plan** define what constitutes a disaster?

2. Are there clear guidelines to indicate when the Disaster Response **Plan** should be invoked?

3. Has the Company established a disaster response team?

4. Are the responsibilities of the disaster response team members segregated to establish clear reporting authority?

5. Does the **Plan** indicate that there is a role for a designated "disaster liaison" and/or back-up liaison?

6. Does the **Plan** indicate that the designated disaster liaison and/or back-up liaison have been advised of their duties?

7. Does the **Plan** provide for training of staff in order to prepare them on their responsibilities in the case of a disaster?

8. Has the Company established varying levels of response based on the severity of the disaster?

Claimant Services: (Doctors & Hospitals as claimants)

1. Does the **Plan** explain what steps the company has taken to ensure timely responses to claimants?

2. Has Management provided for the additional claims handling capacity (system or personnel) that might be needed during a disaster?

External Communication

1. Does the **Plan** explain what steps will be taken to notify in a timely manner the company's members/subscribers of any procedural changes made?

2. Does the **Plan** explain what steps will be taken to notify in a timely manner its providers of any procedural changes made?

3. Does the **Plan** explain what steps will be taken to notify in a timely manner its brokers/agents of any procedural changes made?

4. Does the **Plan** describe how your company communicates with and responds to employees of a group located in state, when the employer is out of state during a disaster?

5. Does the **Plan** describe how your company communicates with and responds to employees of a group located out of state, when the employer is in state during an emergency?

Fraud Detection:

1. If normal controls are not in place due to a disaster, does the **Plan** include any additional procedures for detecting fraud?

2. Does the **Plan** include procedures for reporting fraudulent activity to the appropriate regulatory authorities?

Testing of Plan:

1. Has the **Plan** been tested?

2. Does the **Plan** indicate when the last test was conducted?

3. Does the **Plan** indicate how often the **Plan** will be tested?

4. Did the testing include the use of an alternate site for information technology (IT) systems?