

Information for Texas Health Steps (THSteps) Providers

Topic: THSteps Lab Specimens: Response to Hurricane Harvey

Effective date: August 25, 2017

Texas Health Steps Medical Providers,

In response to Hurricane Harvey, the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Laboratory has created specimen handling tips for providers who submit specimens to the DSHS Laboratory.

Please review and follow the specimen handling tips outlined below.
Thank you.

Response to Hurricane Harvey: DSHS Laboratory Specimen Handling

As Texas responds to Hurricane Harvey, the DSHS Laboratory has these tips for THSteps providers to follow.

1. Collect all specimens as usual.
2. Expect delays from courier and postal services for areas that will be impacted by the hurricane. Hold specimens until shipping and mailing services become available next week.
3. Store specimens to ensure they remain at the appropriate temperature until shipping/mailing.
 - a. Freeze serum specimens after collection for glucose, cholesterol/HDL/lipid panel, and HIV/syphilis.
 - b. Refrigerate whole blood specimens for lead and hemoglobin.
4. Anticipate loss of power and possible flooding. Prepare a backup storage method, especially for those specimens that require refrigeration and freezing.
5. Maintain specimens in a dry location, especially for newborn screening specimens.
6. Expect a possible backlog for courier and postal services when they resume.

Visit the DSHS Laboratory website at

<http://www.dshs.texas.gov/lab/default.shtm> for more information.