

EMS busy; Hospitals Lose Power

Jessie Halladay, Linda Stahl and Joseph Gerth

Several hospitals in the area lost power during the storm and were forced to go to backup generators, Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson said, but none were forced to evacuate.

A spike in calls prompted Louisville Metro Emergency Medical Services to add personnel — going from 21 ambulances and fly-cars to a total of 36 units at the height of the storm.

Dr. Neal Richmond, director of EMS, said no deaths were reported in Louisville and no one was hospitalized because of downed power lines. But there were 76 calls for medical assistance between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., he said, and many of those involved people hurt by falling or flying tree limbs.

At least two people in Jefferson County suffered severe head injuries after being struck by tree limbs, with others injured in falls from roofs as they tried to clear debris, or, later, becoming unconscious because of fumes from generators, Richmond said.

Jewish Hospital was treating some trauma patients as well as patients with less serious injuries suffered in the storm, according Barbara Mackovic, a hospital spokesperson. Sts. Mary and Elizabeth Hospital was operating with a generator, she said. "There were many downed trees and power lines in that area," she noted.

Some patients came to the hospitals needing oxygen, she said, because they couldn't operate oxygen machines at home.

Emergency officials urged those with oxygen needs or other home life support equipment to contact their suppliers' emergency numbers for assistance as they prepare for several days without power.

Twinbrook Nursing Home on Lowe Road was among those without power. The facility was relying on a generator to light the hallways and run oxygen concentrators, according to a nurse there, Charlene Cain. "We're hanging in there," said Cain, "but it's been a rough day."

In Oldham County, "Our biggest concern is Baptist Northeast Hospital," said Kevin Nuss, the county's emergency management director.

The hospital in La Grange used a backup generator to keep necessary units running, although some wings were without air conditioning, said Betinna White, spokeswoman for Baptist Northeast.

— Jessie Halladay, Linda Stahl and Joseph Gerth