



Medicare Fee-for-Service (FFS) Response to the 2017 Southern California Wildfires

MLN Matters Number: SE17037 **Revised**

Related Change Request (CR) Number: N/A

Article Revised Date: April 2, 2018

Effective Date: N/A

Related CR Transmittal Number: N/A

Implementation Date: N/A

Note: This article was revised on April 2, 2018, to advise providers that the public health emergency declaration and Section 1135 waiver authority expired on March 3, 2018. All other information remains the same.

PROVIDER TYPES AFFECTED

This MLN Matters® Special Edition Article is intended for providers and suppliers who submit claims to Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) for services provided to Medicare beneficiaries, who were affected by the December 2017 wildfires in the State of California.

PROVIDER INFORMATION AVAILABLE

Pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, President Trump declared that, as a result of the effects of the December 2017 Wildfires, an emergency exists in the State of California.

On December 11, 2017, Acting Secretary Hargan of the Department of Health & Human Services declared that a public health emergency (PHE) exists in the State of California retroactive to December 4, 2017, and authorized waivers and modifications under §1135 of the Social Security Act.

On December 13, 2017, the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) authorized waivers under §1812(f) of the Social Security Act for the State of California retroactive to December 4, 2017 for those people who are evacuated, transferred, or otherwise dislocated as a result of the effect of wildfires. Providers can request an individual Section 1135 waiver by following the instructions available at <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/Downloads/Requesting-an-1135-Waiver-Updated-11-16-2016.pdf>. The Public Health Emergency declaration and Social Security Act waivers including the Section 1135 waiver authority expired on March 3, 2018.

BACKGROUND

Section 1135 and Section 1812(f) Waivers

As a result of the aforementioned declaration, CMS has instructed MACs as follows:

Change Request (CR) 6451 (Transmittal 1784, Publication 100-04) issued on July 31, 2009, applies to items and services furnished to Medicare beneficiaries within the State of California retroactive to December 4, 2017, for the duration of the emergency. In accordance with CR6451, use of the “DR” condition code and the “CR” modifier are mandatory on claims for items and services for which Medicare payment is conditioned on the presence of a “formal waiver” including, but not necessarily limited to, waivers granted under either Section 1135 or Section 1812(f) of the Act.

The most current information is available at <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/EPRO/Past-Emergencies/Wildfires.html>.

Also referenced below are Q&As that are applicable for items and services furnished to Medicare beneficiaries within the State of California. These Q&As are displayed in two files:

- One file addresses policies and procedures that are applicable without any Section 1135 or other formal waiver. These policies are always applicable in any kind of emergency or disaster, including the current emergency.
- Another file addresses policies and procedures that are applicable only with approved Section 1135 waivers or, when applicable, approved Section 1812(f) waivers. These Q&As are applicable for approved individual 1135 waivers requested by providers for California.

In both cases, the links below will open the most current document. The date included in the document filename will change as new information is added, or existing information is revised.

- a) Q&As applicable **without any Section 1135** or other formal waiver are available at https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/Downloads/Consolidated_Medicare_FFS_Emergency_QsAs.pdf.
- b) Q&As applicable **only with a Section 1135** waiver or, when applicable, a Section 1812(f) waiver, are available at <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/Downloads/MedicareFFS-EmergencyQsAs1135Waiver.pdf>.

Waiver for California

Under the authority of Section 1135 (or, as noted below, Section 1812(f)), CMS has issued the following waiver in the affected areas of California. Individual facilities do not need to apply for the following approved waiver.

Skilled Nursing Facilities

- a) 1812(f): This waiver of the requirement for a 3-day prior hospitalization for coverage of a Skilled Nursing Facility stay provides temporary emergency coverage of Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) services without a qualifying hospital stay, for those people who are evacuated, transferred, or otherwise dislocated as a result of the effect of the wildfires. In addition, for certain beneficiaries who recently exhausted their SNF benefits, it authorizes renewed SNF coverage without first having to start a new benefit period (Blanket waiver for all impacted facilities).

- o In addition, the waiver provides temporary emergency coverage of SNF services that are not post-hospital SNF services under the authority in §1812(f) of the Social Security Act (the Act), for those people who are evacuated, transferred, or otherwise dislocated as a result of the effects in the State of California, in December 2017. In addition, this waiver provides authority under §1812(f) of the Act to provide coverage for extended care services which will not require a new spell of illness in order to renew provision of services by a SNF. These temporary emergency policies would apply to the timeframes specified in the waiver(s) issued under §1135 of the Act in connection with the effects of the wildfires in the State of California in December 2017. Accordingly, both the effective date and expiration date for these temporary emergency policies are the same as those specified pursuant to the §1135 waivers. Further, unlike the policies authorized directly under the §1135 waiver authority itself, the two policies described above would not be limited to beneficiaries who have been relocated within areas that have been designated as emergency areas. Instead, the policies would apply to all beneficiaries who were evacuated from an emergency area as a result of the effects of the wildfires in California in December 2017, regardless of where the “host” SNF providing post-disaster care is located.

Administrative Relief

Appeal Administrative Relief for Areas Affected by California Wildfires

If you were affected by the California wildfires and are unable to file a timely appeal, respond to pending requests for documentation, or experience an interruption in the receipt of the Remittance Advice (RA) that lists the initial determination(s), please contact your MAC.

Requesting an 1135 Waiver

Information for requesting an 1135 waiver is available at <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/Downloads/Requesting-an-1135-Waiver-Updated-11-16-2016.pdf>.

More information is available in the 1135 Waiver Letter at <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/EPRO/Past-Emergencies/Wildfires.html>.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you have questions, your MACs may have more information. Find their website at <http://go.cms.gov/MAC-website-list>.

Providers may also want to review the CMS Emergency and Preparedness webpage at <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/EPRO/EPRO-Home.html>.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date of Change	Description
April 2, 2018	The article was revised to advise providers that the public health emergency declaration and Section 1135 waiver authority expired on March 3, 2018.
December 18, 2017	Initial article released

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