

Power out at NYC hospital; 200 patients evacuate

October 30 2012

(AP)—A backup generator failed at a New York City hospital Monday night, forcing it to move out more than 200 patients, including 20 babies from the neonatal intensive care unit.

Dozens of ambulances lined up around the block outside New York University Tisch Hospital as doctors and nurses began the slow process of evacuation. They started with the sickest and youngest. Some were on respirators operating on battery power.

"It's a challenging situation," NYU Medical Dean Robert Grossman told WCBS-TV. "We drill all the time for this kind of thing. But this isn't a drill. This is the real thing."

Much of lower Manhattan was plunged into darkness by superstorm Sandy, a monstrous hybrid system that swept across a huge swath of the Eastern U.S.

Most of the power outages in lower Manhattan, where Tisch is located, were due to an explosion at an electrical substation, officials at Consolidated Edison said. It wasn't clear whether flooding or flying debris caused the explosion, said John Miksad, senior vice president for electric operations at Con Edison.

Without power, there are no elevators, meaning patients—some of whom are being treated for cancer and other serious illnesses—must be fully carried down staircases, Grossman said.

As the patients were evacuated, gusts of wind blew their blankets. Nurses and staff huddled around the patients, some holding IVs and other equipment.

Ambulances came from around the city to help transport the sick. Patients will be taken to other hospitals including Mount Sinai and the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

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