

## *Dedicated caregivers go above and beyond during ice storm*

EAST GREENBUSH — As the northeast prepared for a destructive ice storm, so did homecare providers and caregivers. When the full force of the storm hit, home care agencies and caregivers were often the first line of emergency care for the many infirmed and elderly who were without power and heat in the Hudson Valley and Northeastern New York.

Health care provider agencies implemented disaster plans that involved contacting each client days in advance of the pending storm. Phyllis Raymond, president of Accent Care Health Services, Inc., Troy NY stated, "Although we did enact our emergency plan, sometimes you need to just do [what needs to get done] when it happens." One hurdle that Raymond's staff faced was the inability of caregivers to communicate with patients who had converted to digital phone service because of down power and cable lines. "We had a very difficult time reaching clients, but we did everything possible to contact clients and clients' family members—even traveling to client's homes who couldn't be reached by phone to assure their well-being."

Lisa Evans, co-president of Interim Health Care Services of Albany, NY, explained that

caregivers not only faced severe hardships getting through the icy conditions to reach patients, but they also had several caregivers that assisted patients in many non-traditional ways—packing bags, shoveling walks and transporting them to shelters, relative's homes and hotels. In one case, a caregiver who was on her way to care for a patient found that the patient had been relocated to a shelter. Upon arriving at the shelter, the caregiver discovered that the shelter had lost both power and heat and was closing. The caregiver immediately found an operational shelter and transported her patient along with four others to the new facility.

"Occurrences of caregivers going above and beyond are not rare, but rather normal," stated Phyllis Wang, president of the New York State Association of Health Care Providers. "It is extremely important that the public and policy makers alike understand how invaluable home care services are, not just but during extraordinary times, but every day."

