



AT HOME

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OPERATING A HOSPITAL AT HOME PROGRAM IN A FEMA DECLARED DISASTER AREA

INTRODUCTION

In late 2024, the Tampa Bay region faced two devastating hurricanes within weeks: Hurricane Helene, a Category 4 storm that made landfall in Florida's Big Bend area on September 26, and Hurricane Milton, a Category 3 storm that struck near Siesta Key on October 9. These storms caused widespread destruction, catastrophic flooding, extensive power outages, and significant infrastructure damage across Florida.

Tampa General Hospital (TGH), situated on Davis Islands, remained operational throughout both events, thanks to proactive emergency preparedness measures such as the deployment of AquaFence flood barriers and the activation of its on-site power plant. At that time, the TGH at Home program was operating with a census of roughly 10 patients per day.

TGH AQUAFENCE

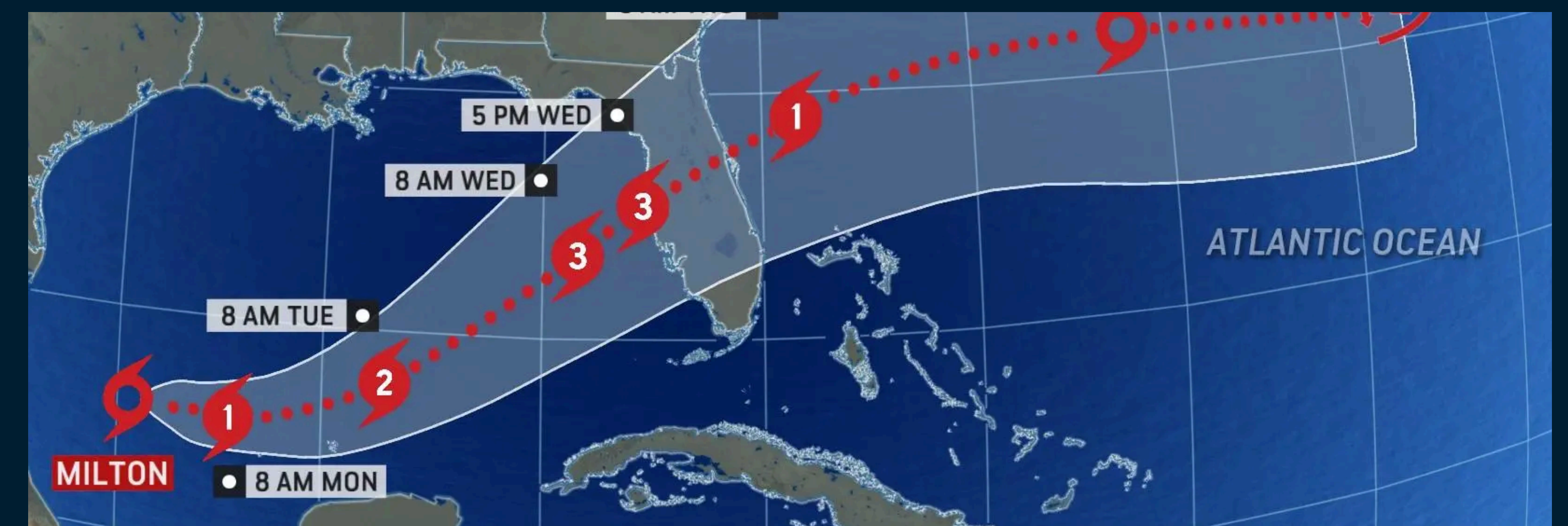


TGH AT HOME RESPONSE

In response to Hurricanes Helene and Milton, the TGH at Home program prioritized patient and staff safety by proactively driving our census to zero—discharging or transferring all patients back to Tampa General Hospital's main campus prior to each storm's landfall and throughout the periods of direct storm impact. Operations were suspended for three days during Hurricane Helene and seven days during Hurricane Milton. Immediately following each storm, the hospital-at-home program was swiftly reactivated, decanting patients back into their homes to support hospital capacity. Outside of these closures, TGH at Home continued to operate within FEMA-declared disaster zones for a combined total of 40 days—11 days following Helene (October 8–18) and 29 days following Milton (November 3–December 1). Despite significant challenges such as fuel shortages, widespread power outages, and extensive flooding, the team successfully maintained operations, demonstrating extraordinary resilience and adaptability in the face of adversity.

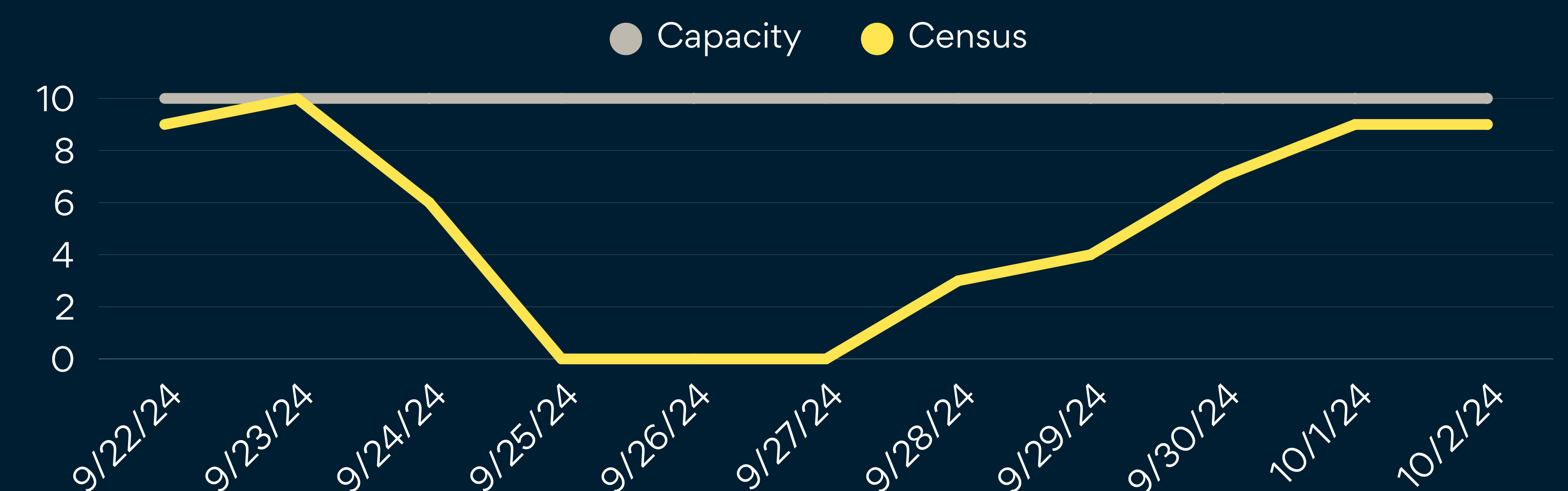
KEY FINDINGS

- Staff demonstrated extraordinary resilience, with over 95% of team members promptly returning to work despite personal hardships from storm-related damages.
- The TGH at Home program achieved its highest-ever patient census within one week following Hurricane Helene, highlighting exceptional dedication and efficiency.
- Patient satisfaction scores remained consistently above 90%, even amidst challenging operating conditions including power disruptions and fuel shortages.
- Despite significant community infrastructure damage, staff ensured uninterrupted communication and coordinated effectively to sustain patient care.
- Team members voluntarily extended shifts and covered additional responsibilities to maintain seamless operations throughout both disasters.
- Leadership effectively supported frontline staff by proactively addressing logistical challenges such as transportation barriers and limited resource availability.
- The team's adaptability and proactive problem-solving significantly reduced hospital admissions during the disaster recovery periods.

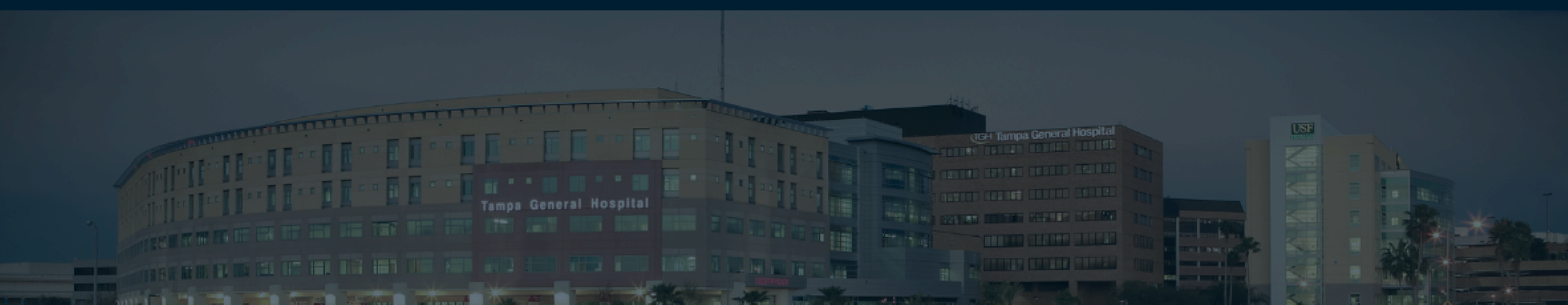
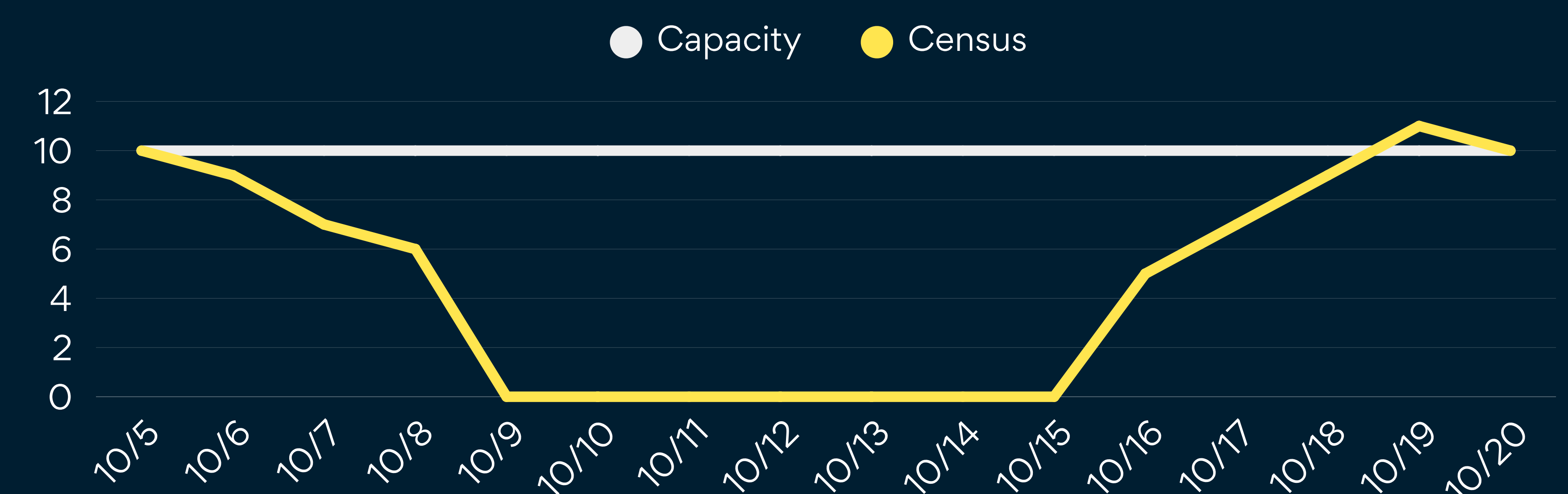


The graphs below illustrate TGH at Home's census and capacity before, during, and after Hurricanes Helene and Milton, highlighting how the program safely transferred all patients back to the academic medical center during each storm, then rapidly decanted patients back home immediately afterward.

HURRICANE HELENE



HURRICANE MILTON



AUTHORS HAVE NO AFFILIATIONS AND NO CONFLICTS

[HTTPS://WWW.TGH.ORG/INSTITUTES-AND-SERVICES/HOSPITAL-AT-HOME](https://www.tgh.org/institutes-and-services/hospital-at-home)