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TEXAS SCHOOL SAFETY CENTER



Hurricane Quick Reference Guide
for School Administrators
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Introduction

School districts in the Texas coastal region benefit from year-round planning for hurricanes due to the enormous potential for impact to their operations. A crucial step in this planning process is making sure the district multi-hazard emergency operations plan is up to date and addresses all five phases of Emergency Management: Prevention, Preparedness, Mitigation, Response and Recovery.

The Texas School Safety Center (TxSSC) has prepared this quick reference guide as an overview for school district administrators. This is not intended to replace in depth emergency planning and implementation but simply to serve as starting point for district hurricane considerations. Additional information is available in the [TxSSC Severe Weather Toolkit](#). TxSSC is currently developing a specific Hurricane Appendix template that will serve to supplement the severe weather annex with more specific information related to hurricanes.

This quick reference guide provides general hurricane information as well as basic concepts to consider for each of the five phases of Emergency Management. The intent is for this document to be applicable for the full scale of Texas school districts. Therefore, districts may need to add or delete items under each phase of emergency management to make the document applicable for their specific environment.

TxSSC strives to keep documents up to date and relevant and welcomes your feedback about this document to the School Safety Readiness Division at TxSSC_EOP@txstate.edu.

Sources for Hurricane Information

What is a Hurricane?

- [National Hurricane Center \(NOAA\) Basic Hurricane Information](#)
- [National Hurricane Center \(NOAA\), Educational Resources](#)

Is my district at risk for a hurricane?

- [Columbia University – US Natural Hazards Index](#)
- [University of Minnesota – Is your County at Risk?](#)

Is this risk a priority for our district?

- [ARCGIS Hurricane Risk Index](#)

How do we adjust for hurricane planning for COVID-19?

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)-Preparing for Hurricanes During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Prevention: Safeguard against consequences unique to hurricanes.

Build a relationship with your local city or county Emergency Management team

- Establish a process for sharing information, requesting resources, and determining documentation needs for reimbursement of storm-related expenses.
- Determine if your local EM team can help with damage assessment and what might be required of the district prior to obtaining assistance.
- If feasible, inquire as to the possibility of your local EM team training your staff on disaster assessment.
- Know and understand what documentation is required to be eligible for disaster reimbursement funds if available and adequately train staff on how to keep and submit the documentation.

Ensure the District Multi-Hazard EOP includes a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)

- The COOP should have considerations in place for continuing essential functions of the district after major damage or loss of facilities. This might include business operations like HR, coordination of damage assessment (ride-out) teams, and the details around remote learning.

Decide in advance when to close and when to reopen and what both mean for your district.

- Develop guidance or policies for your district that include triggers to close and then reopen and ensure that your leadership team is well-informed. This might include points in time before and after the storm.
- Consider what “open” and “re-open” means for your district.
 - Do you have Hurricane-rated facilities to protect essential employees?
 - Are you prohibiting non-essential staff from re-entering facilities during closure?
- Possible Resources:
 - Have a dedicated Emergency Management team? Consider access to and training for resources like [HURREVAC](#) for recommended evacuation tailored to storm details.
 - Communicate with local Emergency Management about determining safe closing and reopening thresholds.

Establish written agreements ahead of any hazard

- Consider agreements about sharing resources with other districts.

- Make sure MOUs and other agreements are up to date and inclusive of details, roles, and resources.
- If the school is used as an emergency shelter make sure agreements are in place that include who sets up and operates the shelter, who is responsible for incidents and damage, and the timing for use of the space.

Plan for how you will share information with your school community

- Include information about district status, transitions to alternative learning and other critical communication items.

Pre-arrange and test housing accommodations, food and transportation routes for key personnel staying behind during the storm.

Mitigation: Reduce the impact of the hazard

Plan to back up all essential data.

- This may include a manual push to the server days before the storm.
- Consider cloud storage or offsite storage, perhaps with an inland or out of state school district.

Relocate or elevate sensitive equipment or information.

- Think about computers, hard drives, servers, and even flash drive that may be impacted by storm surge or flooding.
- Protect essential paper documents as well.

Have a plan for district storage tanks (above and below ground) and stored chemicals:

- If possible empty storage tanks ahead of a storm.
- Protect stored chemicals to prevent unintended release.
- Refer to TCEQ/EPA for guidance on preparing materials to prevent a HazMat spill. [RRT6 Fact Sheet #103A](#)

Have a plan to move or donate perishable food items in your school cafeterias.

- Major hurricanes often bring long periods without power during and after the storm.

Inquire about participation in local hazard mitigation planning with the local emergency management team.

- Be part of the local [FEMA approved mitigation plan](#) to ensure the district can be included in possible funding opportunities.
- The district may have its own mitigation plan as part of the district planning process.

Assess whether district Mental Health resources can support the whole school community before, during and after the hurricane.

- Consider the professional support necessary for loss of community members, a different learning format, loss of major infrastructure, [among other major life changes that might be realized from a hazard event](#).
- Consider local resources that might be able to supplement your regular resources.

Identify and test options to continue learning during and after storm.

- Identify and test suitable locations for use as instructional facilities in the event district campuses cannot be occupied. This may be alternative sites or combining campuses.
- Identify and test technology for remote learning. Consider including remote options in everyday operations for redundancy and familiarization.

Preparedness: Regularly review district readiness for a hurricane.

Plan to secure and preserve major resources.

- Consider fortifying of your campuses and facilities at a predetermined point before storm impact.
- Consider the relocation of vehicles not immediately essential to (ride out) teams following the storm. This will include the majority of your school buses.
- Issue refueling directives to ensure essential vehicles, equipment, and generators are regularly inspected and topped off with the right fuel.
- Ensure all loose objects and materials on district properties have been properly secured, and all essential equipment has been relocated to higher ground.

Ensure disaster supplies and resources are on hand and ready for use:

- Make a list of needed emergency supplies and include where they will be stored and how they will be acquired.
- Purchase additional supplies or replace old or outdated supplies. Ensure that backup supplies are in place so that emergency resources are functional and/or operational.
- Test emergency generators, bilge pumps, and any other crucial emergency items, including storm shutters, flood prevention controls and emergency lighting.

Review and update emergency call lists.

- List should include (at a minimum) key personnel from district staff, contractors/vendors, and other local resources.
- Document where communication information can be located involving the community's return to normal operations within the district.

Review your emergency communication plan with public information staff.

- Consider joint communication operations with other entities, such as the city or county where the district is located.

Review/update interlocal agreements and sources of legal authority

- Verify emergency purchasing authority and district line of succession.
- Identify and address resource shortfalls involving outside agencies/entities.

Communicate with local emergency management officials and the American Red Cross about shelter facility commitments.

- If school district facilities are identified as shelters of last resort, review Memorandums of Understanding/Interlocal Agreements in place to ensure clear expectations for responsibility with the entity operating the shelter (Red Cross, etc...).

- If you have committed personnel or assumed the operational duties of a shelter, ensure you have plans to feed and secure staff and citizens sheltering for an indefinite amount of time.

Conduct hurricane safety training for staff and students.

- Consider conducting training during the hurricane off season with refreshers and highlights as the season approaches.
- The National Hurricane Center, listed in the General Hurricane Information section, has learning opportunities for K-12 students available on their site for teachers.

Train the key personnel who you identify to stay behind.

- Consider cross-training for duties tasked during storm but not readily performed.
- Consider checklists for personal supplies to weather the storm and the aftermath, including cleanliness and comfort without power.

Response: District actions during event

Monitor the safety of on-site personnel during the storm.

- Prepare and maintain an accurate roster of all District personnel working in any capacity during the storm for accountability purposes.
- Assess individuals onsite for any emergency medical needs and monitor wellbeing of assembled staff members.

Provide damage assessment reports to district administration and local Emergency Management

- Consider damages to stored perishable food.
- Align operations and coordination with local jurisdiction emergency management.

Request assistance for any unanticipated needs.

- Needed resources outside of a viable MOU/interlocal agreement should be routed through your local Emergency Management office. Local EM personnel can forward the request to the Texas Department of Emergency Management, who can coordinate the delivery of resources from other jurisdictions.

Implement the district Continuity of Operations plan when appropriate.

- This may run concurrent with the response plan. It should begin as soon as the need to run continuity operations is established and it is safe for staff, vendors, or any other involved parties.
- This may continue well after the response ends and recovery starts.

Recovery: Return to normal district operations.

Assess damage:

- Conduct facility damage assessments as previously instructed by Emergency Management.
- Prioritize damage and make emergency repairs as needed.
- Plan for long term repairs.

Document damages with the assistance of your local Emergency Management office

- Record damage and repairs for the possibility of federal reimbursement.
- Photograph damage and emergency repairs for insurance and reimbursement purposes.

Compile district needs and identify sources for those needs.

- Identify any vendors/resources available to provide emergency services.
- Communicate with your local Emergency Management to discuss immediate and long term recovery needs.

Prepare students, staff and faculty to resume normal operations.

- Coordinate public information activities with local jurisdictions
- Identify and send relevant community messaging
- Consider actions needed for displaced students or staff.
- Engage suitable locations for use as instructional facilities in the event district campuses cannot be occupied.
- Engage technology for remote learning.

Measure long term mental health/trauma-informed care needs to support a return to normal operations.

- Review information from [past major hurricane events](#) to predict what resources you might need to engage.