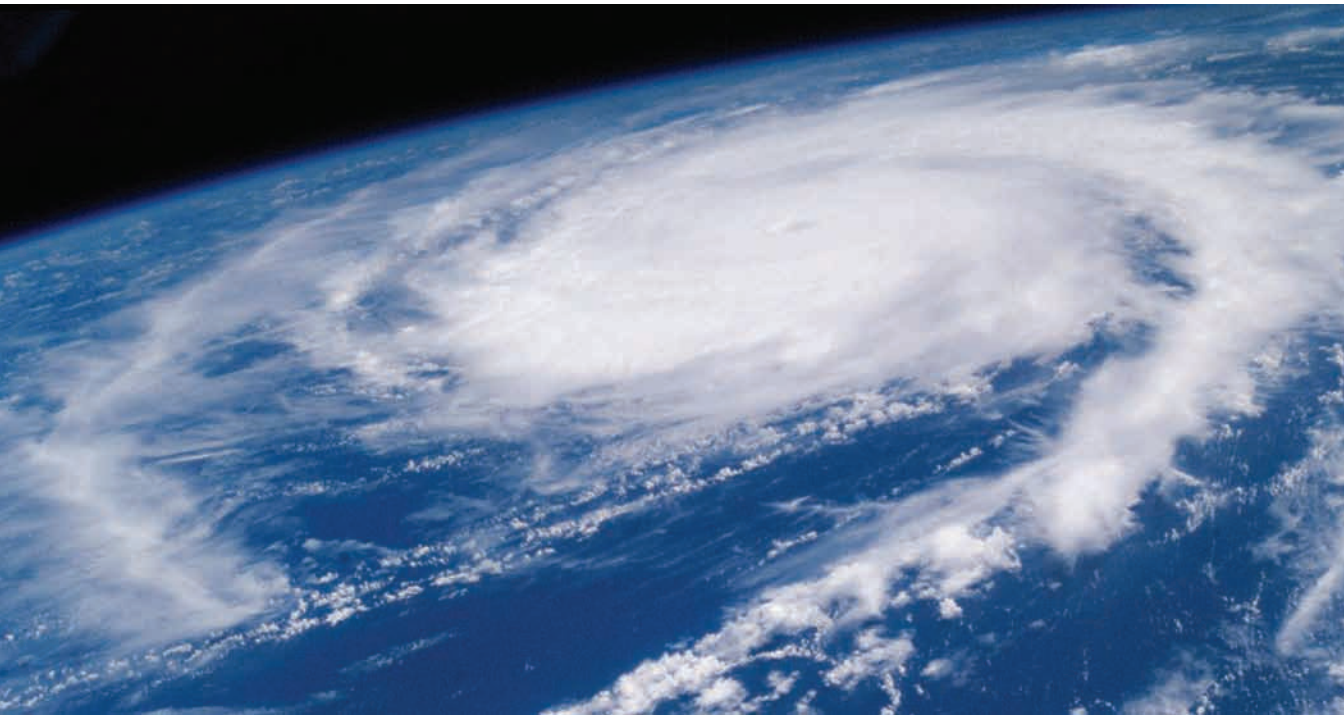


Executive Guide

**HURRICANE
PREPAREDNESS**
Is Your Organization Ready?



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EXECUTIVE GUIDE: Hurricane Preparedness

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IS YOUR ORGANIZATION READY?

Overview

Since the mid-1990s, businesses have been pounded by an average of 14 named storms every year, causing hundreds of billions of dollars in economic damage. The reasons behind this extended period of elevated hurricane activity and intensity of the storms has been a subject of much debate among experts, but there are two facts which are irrefutable: above-average hurricane activity is predicted to continue for several years to come, and companies better make sure they are prepared for the onslaught.

Businesses and organizations have a particular set of challenges during a hurricane. The safety and security of employees, as well as damage to physical facilities and disaster recovery, are major concerns. However, there is also the challenge of maintaining business continuity while minimizing short- and long-term impact on your customers, suppliers, partners, and employees. Losing communication and critical IT systems for even a short time can have a significant impact on revenue, customer satisfaction and supply chain operations.

What can you do to ensure that your organization is prepared in the event that a storm incapacitates your office or offices? This executive guide, designed for senior managers, contains a detailed list of what you can do to prepare your organization before, during and after a hurricane.

The guide to hurricane preparedness contains several steps.

The following is a guideline of the necessary steps to take for your organization before the hurricane hits:

- 1 Foremost is communication and leadership! You will need to decide on a chain of command, keeping in mind that not all employees will act rationally during an emergency and that not all employees will be available or able to get in to the facility after the storm.
- 2 You will need to determine what should be stored off-site during a hurricane emergency and which computer systems and services will need to be kept running at a hot site.
- 3 Once complete, you will need to establish your plan and be sure that all staff are familiar with all parts of the plan—knowing what to do, when to do it, how to do it, and why they are doing it.
- 4 Finally, you will need to test your emergency communications plan. In an emergency, your staff will need to know that you are in charge and have a handle on the situation to help guide them.

BEFORE THE HURRICANE: THINKING ABOUT CONTINUITY

The following is a guideline of the steps you should take for your organization before the hurricane hits:

- Conduct another walk-through of your organization's business continuity plan. Look for business and computing changes since the plan was originally implemented, last tested, or revised. Determine what changes in the plan may be required—and then make them.
- Check your hurricane and flood emergency action plan and update it as necessary. If there are changes, make new copies and distribute it to all staff members. Put a copy of the plan on a Web site hosted at your organization's hot site.
- Determine which valuable records should be stored off-site during a hurricane emergency and which computer systems and services will need to be kept running at a hot spot.

- Contact the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) (www.fema.gov/business/nfip) disaster flood mitigation and insurance protection program. The National Flood Insurance Program makes federally backed flood insurance available to residents and business owners.
- Work with your state and local community, which should have a Hazard Mitigation grant. Authorized under Section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), provides grants to states and local governments to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures after a major disaster declaration. Hazard mitigation planning is an important aspect of a successful mitigation program. States and communities use the hazard mitigation planning process to set short- and long-range mitigation goals and objectives. Hazard mitigation planning is a collaborative process whereby hazards affecting the community are identified, vulnerability to the hazards is assessed, and consensus is reached on how to minimize or eliminate the effects of these hazards. In recognition of the importance of planning, states with an approved, enhanced State Mitigation Plan in effect at the time of disaster declaration may receive additional HMGP funding. For more information, please visit the planning Web site (www.fema.gov/plan/mitplanning/planning_resources.shtm).
- Verify the operation of the standby generator, if present. Check that its fuel tank is full and that the fuel is uncontaminated. (This should be done on a regular basis by the physical plant manager, but follow up with them—don't let it slip.) Many companies who were adversely affected by the recent northeast power outage, and who thought they were “prepared” through the presence of a standby generator, found out after it was too late that they were short on fuel or that their supplies had become contaminated.
- Double check information with outside disaster recovery vendors or suppliers; notify them of any changes in your situation or needs. Cross check all of your services and costs with accounting so you will have the latest information.
- Make sure the building's grounds crew carefully trims all trees so they don't pose a threat to the facility. Ideally there will be no trees close enough to the building to cause direct damage. Dead wood should be removed to reduce wind-blown debris.
- Contact your insurance carrier and review your policy. They will probably want to review your business continuity and disaster recovery plans also. Make sure that replacement equipment or collections are covered. Ensure that copies of updated insurance papers are included in your disaster supplies—and are stored at your hot site for protection.
- Count the number of flashlights you think you'll need and then double that number. Place the flashlights around your office and data center. Mark your emergency flashlight positions on a floor plan that is kept off-site (preferably as a part of your systems continuity and disaster recovery plan).

If you can't communicate, you can't lead, and you definitely can't recover.

- Test your emergency communications plan. Run through all of the “lifeboat drills” for communicating in an emergency with your key staff. Can you get a hold of key staff members through multiple channels (cell phones, pagers, home phones, remote office phones)? Can your emergency communications system escalate action items if key members can't be contacted within the prescribed amount of time?



- DO NOT merely run through the call system to desks or home phones. Test cell phones, BlackBerries and RIM pagers.
- Take people “out of the loop” and find out what happens to your chain of command if a link is broken. Can your emergency communications tool support escalating problems? Can your team cope with a secondary leader taking charge?

Test your hot site’s capabilities and setup.

- Shut off access to your data center’s communications and find out what should be located at your hot site that is geographically far enough away so that it isn’t caught in any resulting natural disasters of its own.
- Review previously established safe havens inland where you plan to send priority collections and other important data. Verify that they are still operating and accessible.
- Review previously established “remote work sites” inland where you plan to convene key staff and equipment. Verify that all data connections are intact and working properly.
- Test the ability of your secondary team members to work remotely. Then begin testing the ability of other team members (from the most important to the least) to work remotely through VPNs and other means.

DURING A HURRICANE WATCH: GETTING READY

A hurricane watch is issued when there is a threat of hurricane conditions within 24-36 hours.

- Initiate your emergency communications “hurricane watch” plan. Ensure that you have communicated with everyone on the list and that they can all both send and receive communications through e-mail and voice systems.
- The safest option is to store valuable organizational papers off-site in a secure facility designed for the protection of information. If valuable papers are kept on-site at your office, place them in waterproof containers and store them on the highest level possible. If you are going to use off-site storage of high priority collections and data, begin packing now. You should have arranged for the pickup of your records or the rental of a sufficient sized van or truck. (You should have already worked out payment details, driver, size of vehicle needed, and company.) The vehicle should be automatic shift, have air conditioning, and an AM/FM radio. Be sure to have a first aid kit and fire extinguisher put in the cab. At this point, your safe destination should be your hot site or remote inland worksite.
- Free as many staff as possible from routine duties, even if this means announcing that your institution is closing to the public to begin preparations.
- Listen to a battery-operated radio or television for hurricane progress reports.
- Secure buildings by closing and boarding up windows. Remove outside antennas. Take in all loose objects on the grounds—benches, birdbaths, art works, and anything that is bolted to concrete.
- Secure trash cans, gates, and garden hoses. Take down awnings and other items that may blow away.
- Turn your data center HVAC system to its coldest settings in case you have to “dump its load” to keep your UPS systems powering critical computers.

- Notify outside contractors and your hot site that you may be calling on their services in 24 to 48 hours. This will alert them to begin monitoring your situation. Ensure that they are a part of your emergency communications plan.
- If you are going to continue working, review the evacuation plan and emergency communications plan.
- Begin preparations in the building. Have staff members clear their desks. All papers, files, collections, and other materials must be put under cover. At this point, basic patron services must be terminated.
- Identify shelters established by the city and make sure this information is distributed to all staff members—just in case they need the assistance. Make sure that elderly, pregnant, or disabled staff members have assistance and release them from further duties.
- Fill water storage containers and make sure they are stored in two different areas of the building in locations where, if they rupture, collections will not be damaged.
- Make sure all of your institution's vehicles are filled with gas. It is also a good idea to install locking gas caps, since others will steal gas during an emergency.
- Refresh the staff regarding their responsibilities after the storm is over. Determine when different staff members should report to work. (You probably won't want everyone coming in all at once, before the assessment of damage is completed.) Make sure everyone knows what they are supposed to do after the storm—there will be little hope of communicating with all of your staff during the first 48 hours after a storm, so plan ahead.

DURING A HURRICANE WARNING: HIGHEST ALERT

A hurricane warning is issued when hurricane conditions (winds of 74 miles per hour or greater or dangerously high water and rough seas) are expected in 24 hours or less.

- Initiate your emergency communications “hurricane warning” plan.
- If power to the area is lost, manually unplug (do not just turn off) all computer systems that are not needed. The reason you want to unplug them instead of turning them off is to avoid any potential problem of a power “surge” when electricity is restored.

If officials indicate evacuation is necessary:

- Initiate your emergency communications “hurricane is hitting” plan.
- Leave as soon as possible. Avoid flooded roads and watch for washed-out bridges.
- If you can, have building maintenance turn off main electricity and the main water valve.
- If time permits, and you live in an identified surge zone, elevate all key paperwork and computers to protect them from flooding. Better yet, move them to a higher floor if you have one. If possible, move collections away from windows. (This becomes even more important if you don't have hurricane shutters.) Move collections from bottom floors if there is any potential for flooding. Take second priority collections to the safest locations in the building (preferably interior rooms or rooms with no windows which are not on top floors) and cover with plastic sheeting. Securely tape this sheeting so it won't blow off.



- Brace double doors and garage or loading dock doors. Limit building access to one or two points since the others can be shut down. Caulk under doors—any place that water could enter. Silicone caulk will easily peel up afterwards.
- Obtain several hundred dollars in petty cash for post-hurricane emergency supplies.
- Take half of your institution’s vehicles to a public parking garage. While flying debris may damage them, these facilities are typically well built and are likely to withstand even major hurricanes. You may not be able to retrieve the vehicles for several days, but this will at least maximize their potential for survival. Vehicles left at your facility should be put under cover if possible. If there is no cover, park the vehicle as close to the building as possible—that way at least one side may be protected from wind and flying debris. Try to anticipate the direction of the wind and park the vehicles on the downwind side.
- Cover all desks, computers, copiers, and other equipment with plastic sheeting. Securely tape this down by running tape around the items.
- If your institution has any rooftop items (antennas or satellite dishes), remove them if possible.
- If there is a staff lounge with a refrigerator, turn it to the coldest setting. If your facility has a walk-in cooler, turn it to the lowest setting.
- Based on last-minute weather bulletins and the advice of local authorities, determine if there is a need for staff to stay in the building. If not, all staff should leave the institution, securing the last hurricane shutters as they leave. Be sure to leave power to essential equipment (security, fire, emergency lighting, and environmental controls) on. The rest can be cut off. Likewise, if your HVAC system does not use gas, but there are gas lines entering the building, shut them off at the main.
- Lock up the building and leave.
- Advise police and fire chiefs of your status.

AFTER THE HURRICANE: FACILITATING THE DISASTER RECOVERY PROCESS

Once you know the hurricane is over, you’ll need to switch gears. Again, go back to that communications plan and enact your recovery scenarios. Get someone on-site as quickly as possible to assess the damage and prevent vandalism or theft if the damage is great enough to allow it.

Enact your “disaster recovery” communications plan.

- Your disaster recovery plan should have a set of steps for recovery, beginning with a recovery communications plan, hot site de-integration plan, and restoration procedures for normalizing staff activities.
- Communicate as you proceed. Not everyone will know that you are “on track,” so keep communications flowing. Let all staff know how the progress is coming and give them the next milestone in the recovery plan to look forward to.
- Enter your building with caution. Beware of snakes, insects, and animals driven to higher ground by floodwater.
- Take pictures of the damage, both to the building and its contents, for insurance claims.

- Look for electrical system damage. If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main circuit breaker (if you didn't do that before leaving the building). If you have to step in water to get to the circuit breaker, call the building electrician first for advice.
- Check for sewage and water lines damage. If you suspect sewage lines are damaged, avoid using the toilets and call the facility plumber. If water pipes are damaged, contact the water company and avoid using water from the tap.
- If you have a raised floor in the data center and the data center is on the ground floor (or below), lift the floor panels and check below them for leakage or flooding. If you have power cables as well as data cables running under the floor, think twice before you power up the systems. When in doubt, don't be a hero.

The second biggest problem will be the water.

- Locate hidden water damage by taking moisture readings around window casings, exterior doors and roof vents, etc.
- Speed is the most important! When the water source has been eliminated, professional extraction must begin immediately to prevent health hazards and further damage. Restorative drying, including a mildewcide treatment, will need to be completed.

The third problem will be the prevention of further damage or vandalism.

- Most insurance companies state that "...the insured is responsible for taking any reasonable and prudent steps necessary to preserve, protect and secure the structure and contents from further damage." Of course you can't stop a hurricane. But you will need to take steps toward limiting further damage due to continued hazards, theft, or vandalism. Your subsequent efforts (during or after water removal) will be to "contain" any potential damage—to protect and secure your property and computer systems from weather and other factors as much as possible. This will need to be accomplished even before an adjuster has the opportunity to survey the damage.