Health Impacts of Hurricanes

More Than Just Property Damage

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CDC/NCEH/DEHSP/EMRC/PEMS
2020 Hurricane Season Forecasts

- Activity for 2020 is predicted to be slightly higher in intensity compared to 2019.

- A total of 14 named storms, eight hurricanes and four major hurricanes are expected this season per the Colorado State University prediction center.

- Do not count on the weather getting the memo.

- Prepare for the worst, then you will only have GOOD surprises.
Preparedness for 2020 Season

- Do not rely on 120 hour warning model!
- Preparing self/family will enable you to prepare for your job.
- A direct storm impact is not required to have personal and professional impacts from a hurricane.
- Some of the worst historical damage is from slow moving or stalled tropical storms, not hurricanes.
Medical Services Compromised

- Dialysis clinics
- Oxygen concentrators
- Home IV therapy
- Power loss at medical service companies
- Hospitals have limited fuel storage for generators
- Extremely limited radio communications backup at medical facilities
- Loss of medical refrigeration starts clock ticking on medication shelf life at home, pharmacy, hospital, clinics
- Loss of security systems and lighting will require most facilities/stores to close
Direct Citizen Impacts

- Loss of home lighting and refrigeration
- Loss of news sources (radio, TV, internet)
- Outages will eventually impact landlines
- Loss of cell phone charging capability
- Loss of thermostability due to heating/air conditioning failure
- Many hotel companies have a policy to force evacuation if power is not available, to limit liability.
Fallen power lines
- Stay clear of fallen power lines. Call the electric company to report them.
- Watch out for power lines overhead.

Flooded homes
- Turn off power to the home if you can stand in a dry place to do it.
- Otherwise, have an electrician turn off power to the home.
- Never turn power on or off, or use an electric tool or appliance, while standing in water. (Really people?)

Water-damaged power tools
- Never use an electrical device if it got wet.
- If it’s still plugged in, turn off the power at the main breaker.
- Wait for an electrician to check the device before using it.
Spoiled or Contaminated Food

- Spoiled or contaminated food and water can make people sick.
- If they get sick, they may have limited access to medical care.
- Encourage people to do the following:
  - Stockpile canned food ahead of time.
  - Keep food fresh.
  - Throw out spoiled food.
  - Clean off canned food. Storing canned goods in gallon zip bags buys time.
  - Use bottled water if possible, boiled water if necessary, especially for infant formula. Only use treated water (disinfected or purified) if bottled and boiled water are not available.
Carbon Monoxide Poisoning: Advice for the Public

- Never use gas or coal-burning equipment inside your home, basement, or garage. Keep it outside and at least 20 feet from any window, door, or vent.
- Use a battery-operated or battery backup CO detector any time you use a generator or anything else that burns fuel.
- Never run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your home, even with the garage door open.
- Never heat your home with a gas oven.
- If you have a carbon monoxide detector and it starts beeping, leave your home right away and call 911.
Other Health Risks

- Driving through flood waters
- Animals and pests
- Psychological harm
- Injuries during cleanup
- Mold
- Hyperthermia and hypothermia
CDC Hurricane Resources

- https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/
- https://www.ready.gov/hurricanes
- http://spaghettimodels.com/
Hurricane Messaging during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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EPIC Webinar: 2020 Hurricane Season

May 27, 2020
COVID-19 Hurricane Messages
Principles of Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication

Be first, be right, and be credible.

Importance of talking “to” your audience instead of “at” your audience.

Understand who you are talking to.

• Use empathy.
• Speak clearly.
• Use open body language.

emergency.cdc.gov/cerc
Amending Messages for COVID-19: Mental Health

Acknowledge in words the difficulty of dealing with multiple disasters.

- Planning for hurricane season and other potential disasters can be stressful, and because the 2020 hurricane season comes during the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be especially so.
- Taking care of emotional health helps people think clearly, react to urgent needs.
  - Provide resources for the community such as the SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline and CDC materials on stress and coping.
  - Provide parents resources for supporting children.
  - Responders may experience secondary traumatic stress.

- **CDC: Coping with a Disaster or Traumatic Event**
- **CDC: COVID-19: Stress and Coping**
- **SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline**: 1-800-985-5990 or text “TalkWithUs” (for English) or “Hablanos” (for Spanish) to 66746.
Amending Messages for COVID-19: Before a Hurricane

Help people understand how to take COVID-19 protective actions while preparing their families and homes for a hurricane.

- Give yourself more time than usual to prepare your emergency food, water, and medicine supplies.
- Take steps to protect your and others’ health when running essential errands and when filling prescriptions.
- Pay attention to local guidance about updated plans for evacuations and shelters, including potential shelters for your pets.
- Include items such as soap, hand sanitizer, cloth face coverings in evacuation “go kits.”
- Follow social distancing recommendations when checking on neighbors and friends.

- CDC: Preparing for Hurricanes During the COVID-19 Pandemic
Amending Messages for COVID-19: After a Hurricane

Help people take COVID-19 precautions in addition to following regular safety guidance about power outages, food and water safety, and avoiding injuries.

- Continue to use preventive actions like washing your hands, wearing a face covering in public, and social distancing during clean up or when returning home.
- It may take longer than usual to restore power and water if they are out.
- If you are injured or ill, contact your medical provider. Keep wounds clean to prevent infection. Accessing medical care may be more difficult than usual.
- It is natural to feel anxiety, grief, and worry. Coping with these feelings and getting help when you need it will help you, your family, and your community recover.

- CDC: Preparing for Hurricanes During the COVID-19 Pandemic
Amending Messages for COVID-19: Shelters

Help people understand how to prevent infection if they need to go to a public shelter.

- Check with local officials to see if your shelter location is different this year, including for pets.
- Bring items to help you stay protected: soap, hand sanitizer, cloth face coverings for people 2 years and older.
- Practice social distancing in the shelter and help children do the same. Stay at least 6 feet away from people outside of your household.
- Follow disaster shelter policies and procedures designed to protect everyone in the shelter.
- If you feel sick when you arrive at the shelter or start to feel sick while sheltering, tell shelter staff immediately.

- [CDC Going to a Public Disaster Shelter During the COVID-19 Pandemic](https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/COVID-19/sheltering.html)
Hurricane Educational materials – by Topic and Language

https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/educationalmaterials.html
COVID-19 Communications Resources

- Materials available in multiple languages
- Printable posters for shelters
- Sign language videos

Social Media: Hurricanes and COVID-19

- twitter.com/CDCEnvironment
- www.ready.gov/hurricanes
- www.weather.gov/wrn/2020-social-media-hpw
Coordinating Messaging
# Phase-based messages: Add in COVID-19 messaging

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<th>Phase</th>
<th>Readiness and preparation</th>
<th>Returning home</th>
<th>Environmental hazards</th>
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<td>• Coping with trauma</td>
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<td>Phase 2</td>
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<td>Phase 5</td>
<td>1 month post-storm, later</td>
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<td>• Carbon Monoxide Safety</td>
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[https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/readiness/hurricane_messages.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/readiness/hurricane_messages.htm)
Coordinating Messages is More Important Than Ever!

- Clear and share in advance with all relevant organizations.
- Allow suggestions and comments – iron out any disagreements.
- Decide who leads on each type of message (topic, audience).
- During the response, stay in sync through constant contact.
Considerations for Disaster Shelters During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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EPIC Webinar: 2020 Hurricane Season

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cdc.gov/coronavirus
Hurricane season 2020

- Hurricane season is expected to be more active than average this year.
- In spite of stay-at-home orders, it may become necessary for people to seek safety in evacuation shelters.
- Shared living areas and crowded conditions in shelters require modifications to standard shelter operations.
- CDC developed recommendations to assist shelter staff to reduce the possibility of transmission of COVID-19 among shelter staff, volunteers, shelter residents, and visitors.
Sheltering during the COVID-19 pandemic

Questions

• How do we lower the risk of transmission?
• How do we operate while maintaining social distancing?
• What strategies can we use to monitor illness?
• What do we do if someone gets sick?
• What should people bring to a shelter?
• What are considerations for people in the higher risk category?
• What are considerations for children?
• What if someone brings their pet?
First consideration
Disaster shelter options During Covid-19
Disaster shelter options

Option 1 - Hotels or dormitories

Preferred option:

• Separate rooms lower risk of transmission
• Areas for feeding, laundry, and other services
• Hotels preferred over dormitories because they have private bathrooms, televisions, phones, and bedding
Disaster shelter options

Option 2 - Campgrounds

- People can stay in separate tents, cabins, or RVs
- Many sites have bathrooms, laundry and bathing facilities
- Need to check for accessibility
- Post-hurricane sheltering only
Disaster shelter options

Option 3 - Congregate shelters
- Small shelter (fewer than 50 residents)
  - May need more shelters
  - Less complicated operations
  - May be closer to home than larger facility
- Large shelters
  - Option of last resort
  - Demobilize when safe to do so
  - Move shelter residents out of large shelters as soon as possible
CDC Interim Guidance for General Population Disaster Shelters During the COVID-19 Pandemic
The guidance covers the following topics:

- People who need to take extra precautions
- Screening, monitoring, and isolation
- Intake area and waiting room
- Isolation area
- Discontinuation of isolation
- Information in all common areas of the shelter
- Social distancing
- Food service
- Increased use of supplies
- Cleaning and disinfection
- Air filtration
- Special considerations for children
- Animals in emergency shelters
Key points and important messages

• Alternatives to opening disaster shelters, such as sheltering in-place, should be considered if safe.

• Everyone in the shelter should wear a cloth face covering at all times except when not practical, such as when eating or showering.*

• Access to safe shelter is critical and shelters should not exclude people who are having symptoms or test positive for COVID-19. These individuals should be directed to the isolation area.

* Cloth face coverings should not be placed on babies or children younger than 2 years of age or anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the covering without assistance.
Key points and important messages

• Staff should monitor residents for symptoms of COVID-19 and other illness, including mental/behavioral health concerns, and provide a daily update to the local health department.

• Shelters should provide separate areas to isolate residents with symptoms of COVID-19.

• If testing is available, shelter staff, volunteers, and residents should be tested in accordance with state and local health department guidelines.
Key points and important messages

• Use of cloth face coverings, frequent handwashing, social distancing, and frequent cleaning and disinfection should be maintained in all areas of the shelter, including animal area.

• In accordance with the ADA, service animals must be allowed to stay with their handlers unless the animal is out of control or poses a direct threat to health and safety.
CHALLENGES
Some people may be afraid to go to a shelter due to COVID-19. There may not be enough masks, face coverings, or testing available for everyone. People may not comply with social distancing and other preventive measures. May be a heightened level of anxiety in the shelter. Options to transport people who can’t drive themselves may be limited and increase the risk of exposure. Some staff and volunteers may be unable or unwilling to assist in the shelter.
Questions
The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.