Appendix E: Public Messaging Guidance on Hurricanes

The following contents, which have been approved by the CDC and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), may be utilized by SLTTs to communicate hurricane preparedness actions to individual Americans and community organizations during a pandemic. All public messaging must be accessible to individuals with disabilities and individuals with limited English proficiency. This appendix also contains messaging designed specifically for youth audiences.

Be Prepared for a Hurricane

Highlight:

Threats from hurricanes include powerful winds, heavy rainfall, storm surges, coastal and inland flooding, rip currents, tornadoes, and landslides.

Definition:

A hurricane is a storm that forms over warm ocean waters and has sustained winds of 74 mph or higher. The Atlantic and Central Pacific hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30. The East Pacific hurricane season runs from May 15 through November 30.

Quick Facts:

- Hurricanes can happen along any U.S. coast or territory in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans or the Gulf of Mexico.
- Hurricanes can affect areas more than 100 miles inland.
- Hurricanes are most active in September.

Protect Yourself Key Messages:

- If you are under a hurricane warning, find safe shelter right away.
- Determine your best protection for high winds and flooding, as well as infectious diseases, including COVID-19. Keep in mind that your best protection from the effects of a hurricane may differ from your best protection from disease.
- Know your evacuation zone! Due to limited space as a result of COVID-19, public evacuation shelters may not be the safest choice for you and your family.
  - Unless you live in a mandatory evacuation zone, it is recommended that you make a plan to shelter-in-place in your home, if it is safe to do so.
  - If you live in a mandatory evacuation zone, make a plan with friends or family to shelter with them where you will be safer and more comfortable.
  - Only evacuate to shelters if you are unable to shelter at home or with family or friends. Note that your regular shelter may not be open this year. Check with local authorities for the latest information about public shelters.
  - If you must evacuate to a public shelter, try to bring items that can help protect you and others in the shelter from COVID-19, such as hand sanitizer, cleaning materials, and two cloth face coverings per person. Children under 2 years old, people who have trouble

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breathing, and people who cannot take the cloth face covering off without help should not wear cloth face coverings.


• Pay attention to emergency information and alerts.

• Only use outdoor generators outdoor that are at least 20 feet away from your home and away from windows, doors, and vents.

• Do not walk, swim, or drive through flood waters.

**How to Stay Safe When a Hurricane Threatens**

**Prepare Now**

• Know your area’s risk of hurricanes.

• Have several ways to receive warnings and alerts from the National Weather Service and your local officials. Do not rely on a single source of weather alert information. Sign up for your community’s warning system. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) and NOAA Weather Radios also provide emergency alerts. Turn on *Wireless Emergency Alerts* (WEA) in your smartphone settings.

(https://www.ready.gov/alerts)

• If you are at risk for flash flooding, watch for signs such as heavy rain.

• Practice going to a safe shelter, such as a [FEMA safe room](https://www.fema.gov/safe-rooms) or *International Code Council (ICC) 500 storm shelter*. The next best protection is a small, interior, windowless room in a sturdy building on the lowest level that is not subject to flooding. Practice going to these places while following the [latest guidelines](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html) from the CDC and your state and local authorities to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

• Based on your location and community plans, make your own plans for evacuation or sheltering-in-place. Due to limited space as a result of COVID-19, unless you live in a mandatory evacuation zone, it is recommended that you shelter-in-place in your home. If you live in a mandatory evacuation zone, talk with your friends and family to see if you can shelter with them. Only evacuate to shelters if you are unable to shelter at home or with family or friends. Be sure to review your previous evacuation plan and consider alternative options to maintain social and physical distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and update your plan accordingly.

• Become familiar with your evacuation zone, the evacuation route, and the shelter locations. Note that your regular shelter may not be open this year because of COVID-19. Check with local authorities for the latest information about shelters. Only evacuate to shelters if you are unable to shelter at home or with family and friends.
Once you have identified your safe location, gather needed supplies, including cleaning supplies, non-perishable foods, and water. If you are able to, set aside items like soap, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, and general household cleaning supplies that you can use to disinfect surfaces you touch regularly. After a hurricane, you may not have access to these supplies for days or even weeks. Keep in mind each person’s specific needs, including medication. Do not forget the needs of pets.

- Keep important documents in a safe place or create password-protected digital copies.

**Survive During**

- If you live in a mandatory evacuation zone and local authorities instruct you to evacuate, do so immediately. Do not drive around barricades or through floodwater.

- If you must evacuate, if possible, bring with you items that can help protect you and others in the shelter from COVID-19, such as hand sanitizer, cleaning materials, and two cloth face coverings per person. Children under 2 years old, people who have trouble breathing, and people who cannot take the cloth face covering off without help should not wear cloth face coverings.


- If sheltering during high winds, go to a FEMA safe room, ICC 500 storm shelter, or a small, interior, windowless room or hallway on the lowest floor that is not subject to flooding.

- If staying at a shelter or public facility, take steps to keep yourself and others safe from COVID-19. Wash your hands often, maintain a physical distance of at least six feet between you and people who are not part of your household, and avoid crowds and gathering in groups. When possible, wear a cloth face covering. Children under 2 years old, people who have trouble breathing, and people who cannot take the cloth face covering off without help should not wear cloth face coverings. If possible, wash your cloth face covering on a regular basis.

- If you are sick and need medical attention, contact your healthcare provider for further care instructions and shelter-in-place, if possible. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 9-1-1 and let the operator know if you have, or think you might have, COVID-19. If possible, put on a cloth face covering before help arrives. If staying at a shelter or public facility, alert shelter staff immediately so they can call a local hospital or clinic.

  [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html]

- If trapped in a building by flooding, go to the highest level of the building. Do not climb into a closed attic. You may become trapped by rising flood water.

- Listen for current emergency information and instructions.

- Use a generator or other gasoline-powered machinery ONLY outdoors and at least 20 feet from your home and away from windows, doors, and vents. If you are using generators near your
home, install battery-operated or battery back-up carbon monoxide (CO) detectors and check to be sure they are working properly.

(https://www.cdc.gov/co/generatorsafetyfactsheet.html)

- Do not walk, swim, or drive through flood waters. Turn Around. Do not drown. Just six inches of fast-moving water can knock you down, and one foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away.
- Stay off bridges over fast-moving water.

**Be Safe After**

- Pay attention to information and special instructions from authorities.
- Be careful during clean-up. Wear protective clothing, use appropriate face coverings or masks if cleaning mold or other debris, and maintain a physical distance of at least six feet while working with someone else. People with asthma and other lung conditions and/or immune suppression should not enter buildings with indoor water leaks or mold growth that can be seen or smelled, even if they do not have an allergy to mold. Children should not take part in disaster cleanup work.

(https://www.cdc.gov/mold/cleanup-guide.html)
(https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/clinicians_asthma.html)

- Continue taking steps to protect yourself from COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, such as washing your hands often and cleaning commonly touched surfaces.
- Do not touch electrical equipment if it is wet or if you are standing in water. If it is safe to do so, turn off electricity at the main breaker or fuse box to prevent electric shock.
- Avoid wading in flood water, which can contain dangerous debris. Underground or downed power lines can also electrically charge the water.
- Save phone calls for emergencies. Phone systems are often down or busy after a disaster. Use text messages or social media to communicate with family and friends.
- Document any property damage with photographs. Contact your insurance company for assistance.
- Be available for family, friends, and neighbors who may need someone to talk to about their feelings. Helping others cope with their anxiety and stress can make your community stronger. Many people may already feel fear and anxiety about COVID-19. The threat of a hurricane can add additional stress. Follow CDC guidance for managing stress during the COVID-19 pandemic.


**Take an Active Role in Your Safety**

Go to ready.gov and search for “hurricane.” Download the FEMA app to get more information about preparing for a hurricane and for pandemics.
Helpful Links:

- https://www.ready.gov/hurricanes

Videos

- Storm Surge Public Service Announcements (FEMA) (Video) (https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL720Kw_0oijLoTEBMTVHJ_bDUCBYM3V4_)
- Storm Surge (NOAA) (Video) (https://oceantoday.noaa.gov/hurricanestormsurge/)
- Six Things to Know Before a Disaster (FEMA) (Video) (https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/videos/159970)
- When the Waves Swell – Hurricane Animated (FEMA) (Video) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STiMKcYvQ4)

Tip Sheets

- How to Prepare for a Hurricane (PDF) (https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/fema_how-to-prepare-for-hurricane.pdf)
- Prepare Your Organization for a Hurricane Playbook (PDF) (http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/98410)

More Information

- Coronavirus (Federal Government Response) (Link) (https://www.coronavirus.gov/)
- Flood Map Service Center (FEMA) (Link) (https://msc.fema.gov/portal/search)
- Floodsmart.gov (FEMA) (Link) (https://www.floodsmart.gov/)
- National Flood Insurance Program (FEMA) (Link) (https://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program)
- National Storm Surge Hazard Maps (NOAA) (Link) (https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/nationalsurge/)

Information for Youth

About

Hurricanes are severe tropical storms that form in the southern Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and in the eastern Pacific Ocean. They collect heat and energy through contact with warm ocean waters and then move toward land. Evaporation from the ocean water increases their power. Hurricanes rotate in a counterclockwise direction around an “eye,” which is the center of the hurricane.
Hurricanes have winds at least 74 miles per hour. When hurricanes come onto land, their heavy rain, strong winds, and large waves can damage buildings, trees, and cars. Storm surge is when rising water moves inland, or away from the coastline. It is very dangerous.

The COVID-19 pandemic will be ongoing as hurricane season and other natural disasters, such as flooding, earthquakes, and wildfires, continue to occur throughout the year. Remember to follow the latest guidelines from the CDC and your state and local authorities to protect yourself and your family from COVID-19.

Words to Know

Evacuation: Leaving an area that officials say is unsafe.

Eye: The center of the storm. Winds and rains die down, but they will start up again very quickly.

Inland: Away from the coastline.

Storm Surge: Heavy waves caused by high wind and a lot of rain.

Tropical: An area of the country that is closer to the equator.

Am I at Risk?

Hurricanes are most common from June through November. Any U.S. coast by the Atlantic or Pacific Oceans can get hit, and you can feel the effects more than 100 miles inland. People who live on the coast may experience extreme winds and flooding from rain and storm surge. People who live inland are at risk for wind, thunderstorms, and flooding.

Living through environmental disasters, like hurricanes, can be more complicated when we are also experiencing a pandemic like COVID-19. It is important to be prepared and to understand how COVID-19 might affect you and your family.

COVID-19 may affect different people in different ways. Most people who are diagnosed with COVID-19 have not been seriously sick. Those more likely to become seriously sick include adults over age 65 or those who already have other chronic conditions, like diabetes and heart disease. Based on available evidence, children do not appear to be at higher risk for COVID-19 than adults. By following the CDC’s recommendations for protecting yourself from COVID-19, you can lower your chances of getting sick, both during a hurricane and in general.


What Can I Do?

Before

- Build an emergency kit.
- Make a family communications plan. Plan how you will keep in touch with family members if you lose power or are separated.
- Help your parents bring in outdoor items like potted plants, patio furniture, decorations, and garbage cans. They can fly away in strong winds!
During

- Do not open the refrigerator or freezer. In case you lose power, you want the cold air to stay in so food will last longer!
- Stay away from windows and glass doors. They could break and hurt you.
- If you do not evacuate, stay inside a closet, hallway, or a room without windows.
- If must evacuate, ask your parent or guardian to bring supplies that can help you protect yourself and your family from COVID-19, such as hand sanitizer, cleaning products, and two cloth face coverings for each member of the family who can wear one. Children under 2 years old, people who have trouble breathing, and people who cannot take the cloth face covering off without help should not wear cloth face coverings.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes, especially with unwashed hands.
- Pay attention to your parents or safety authorities for important instructions.

After

- If you and your family must stay at a shelter or public facility, take steps to protect yourself and others from COVID-19. Maintain a distance of at least six feet, or about two adult arm lengths, between you and people who are not part of your household. Do not get into crowds or groups.
- Wear a cloth face covering while at the shelter. Do not wear a cloth face covering if you have trouble breathing or cannot take off the cloth face covering without help. Babies and kids under the age of 2 should not wear them either. If you can, wash your face cloth covering regularly.
- **Do not go outside without a grown-up.**
- Do not go near any wires that are loose or dangling. They could electrocute you!
- Tell your parents if the air smells weird, it could mean that there are dangerous gasses in the air.
- Text, do not talk. Unless there is a life-threatening situation, send a text so that you do not tie up phone lines needed by emergency workers. Plus, texting may work even if cell service is down.
- Know that it is normal to feel anxious or stressed out. Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. Take care of your body and talk with your parents or other trusted adults if you are feeling upset.

Getting Sick

- Cover your coughs and sneezes! Use a tissue or cough or sneeze into your elbow. If you do use a tissue, throw it in the trash right away.
• Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Sing the “Happy Birthday”
  song twice while you wash your hands. Make sure to wash your hands after blowing your
  nose, coughing or sneezing, using the bathroom, and eating or making food.
• If you cannot find soap and water to wash your hands, use hand sanitizer.
• **Stay away from people who are coughing, sneezing, or sick.**
• Remind your parents to clean surfaces that people touch frequently, like desks, doorknobs,
  light switches, and remote controls.
• Tell your parents if you feel sick.

Learn More

*Did you know?*

Hurricanes can also affect areas greater than 100 miles away from the coastline. People who live
inland are also at risk for wind, thunderstorms, tornadoes, and flooding.

Helpful Links:

• [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov/hurricanes)
• [Ready Wrigley Prepares for Hurricanes](https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/readywrigley/documents/13_239066_ready_wrigley_hurricanes_508.pdf) (CDC)
• [Listo Calixto se Prepara para los Huracanes](https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/readywrigley/documents/13_239066_ready_wrigley_hurricanes_spanish_508.pdf) (CDC)
• [Prepare with Pedro Disaster Activity Book](https://www.ready.gov/kids/prepare-with-pedro)