

Floods, Hurricanes, Fires & Infectious Disease: Making a 2020 & 2021 proof plan

It was May of 2020 and Texas entered May, the month known for heavy rains and flash flooding, the historic coronavirus pandemic was already disrupting schedules and any expectations of normalcy in all arenas of life throughout Texas and worldwide. The unprecedented spread of COVID-19, this pandemic is without comparison in most of our lifetimes. No one could have ever guessed how 2020 would be but here in Texas which is ranked first in the nation for the variety and frequency of natural disasters of course, those expected seasonal threats arrived on time without exception for the added distress COVID-19 has caused. Now it's 2021 and another weather related climate driven disaster emergency has entered the record books. In particular for Texans with disabilities and their parents/care teams or those distressed with chronic conditions & specialized healthcare needs; preparation is paramount and the habit of anticipating and preparing for various emergency scenarios is worth developing.

Texans must be ready for anything!

Be Texas Ready www.texasready.gov

Hurricane Hanna's arrival, which has the distinction of being the first and earliest 8th named storm of the hurricane season, makes absolutely clear that the time is now. There is no time like the present to create new or review, update and renew or revise plans as well as create back up plans b, c, and d in preparation for emergencies.

What should I prepare for? Day, Night, On the Road, During Vacations....

Flooding, wildfires, tornados, hurricanes, hailstorms, sinkholes, erosion and drought are all conditions that regularly occur in Texas.

Sometimes, utilization of the state's natural reserves of oil, gas, and water can lead to subsidence and earthquakes.

Reference NASA https://nisar.jpl.nasa.gov/files/nisar/NISAR_Applications_Hazards_Texas.pdf

Covid lockdown/homeschool/virtual school may provide you a space to **teach the kids**, the whole family, reviewing for yourself too; the habit of maintaining preparedness. In fact, FEMA has reference tools and activities for this. <https://www.ready.gov/kids>

*Hopefully providing kids with good explanation will keep families from feeling as if herding cats in an emergency. In fact you may actually have cats to herd so if you would be so compelled in an emergency written pet preparedness plan can help keep you safe. Pets may play a major role in maintaining family is in the best possible condition during and after an emergency. They may be mental health first responders of sorts for persons with ongoing or chronic mental health concerns compounded by trauma and those with trauma primarily due to the distress of a disaster. Other mental health first aid resources <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/>

*Animals in a dedicated pet carrier or crate are easier to evacuate. Those accustomed to entering the carrier on command are easier to confine quickly in an emergency.

Make plans to for your entire household to work together as a team and stay informed of impending or sudden perils by staying alert to reliable local media

sources and local alerts. Subscribe to text and email alerts issued by city, state and local even neighborhood level officials including www.texasprepares.org, www.redcross.org, or www.fema.gov. <https://www.weather.gov/wrn/wea>

Sometimes when families tend to unusual circumstances like a large maintenance issue or being at home more or both; instances of poisoning may increase.

<https://www.ksat.com/health/2020/07/22/calls-to-south-texas-poison-control-center-spike-amid-coronavirus-pandemic/>

*If you have repair concerns following an emergency or weather event be sure to call a professional repair person you trust and get an inspection to determine if there is damage and how much. Then use that information and decide if you should make an insurance claim prior to contacting your insurer. If you decide to make a claim be certain with follow up contact to make insurers aware when you complete the repairs.

When you hear of a disaster or emergency situation that does not directly affect you always consider how you would have responded. Doing this will highlight the fact that emergencies don't always start with a warning and may happen at any time of the day or night, in the company of strangers, or coworkers or while separated from your household members; those dearest to you. Use imagination to plan so that should such an event occur you've practiced some level of your response. Would you have had the resources to evacuate and find shelter or make repairs or get medical attention?

Do you know that many flooding evacuees arrive to shelters shoeless? This further imperils their health and safety exposing them to wounds, toxins and infection. Secure footwear and functional attire should be a part of your emergency plan for every household member

“Pre” in advance, beforehand

“pare” apportion

What should you wear to a disaster? What will you keep on hand? Let's create a plan!

Creating a disaster plan is literally **saving and budgeting resources** for a proverbial rainy day so **financial preparedness is a crucial part of your household planning**. Write it down and treat it just like a part of your overall budget plan in any budget discussion. Be sure that any **disability**

funding and medical consultation considers emergency preparedness. Ask your doctor about Rx flexibility too in order to respond to emergency conditions. Attention to medical equipment and supplies/suppliers should also be a part of plans for evacuation vs sheltering in place.

Insurance is an important financial preparedness tool.

Homeowner/Renters, Auto, Health, Life and Flood

Personal **Insurances are an integral part of financial planning** for disasters. Keep your documents in a safe container and online in email or document cloud.

Myth:

A renter insurance policy will cover me and my family in case I get flooded out.

Fact:

Renters insurance is a form of homeowner insurance that covers the contents of your rented home or apartment in case of fire and other peril but flood is likely specifically excluded. Flood insurance is the better choice for the scenario.

Myth:

My home is not in a flood zone so flooding isn't a concern.

Fact:

Floods can happen anywhere. More than half of homes flooded by Hurricane Harvey were outside of designated flood zones. Texas is particularly prone to floods.

Renters/tenants and homeowners alike can purchase the protection of flood insurance.

Written plans and instructions can be more easily shared with household members, reviewed regularly to keep up with changes.

Start with a list of medical providers, medications and pharmacies and your network of family, friends and support personnel. The contact information should be written plainly and protected in plastic sleeves or lamination or a water-tight container. This is vital contact information in an emergency that does not rely on electricity or cellular infrastructure. Distributing copies of the list within your home, household and workplaces will support you in case of emergency day or night. Treat personal legal documents such as identity documents, guardianships and power of attorney in a similar way, copying some to a secure internet cloud as needed and keeping originals safe and accessible in case you must evacuate.

Use the basic list of materials to keep ready and helpful hints listed below and customize to organize for individual household needs. If you have pets be certain to include them as you customize the list with good plans for them. Be sure to prepare variations on your plans or a backup plan so that you are flexible enough to respond to a real-life emergency. Prepare mentally and spiritually for the possibility of either being displaced from home, day or night, or unable to get out of your home or move around freely in case of emergencies that require you to shelter in place or those that may occur at a moment's notice.

Emergencies may be complicated by **lack of easy access to transportation** so planning ahead for accessible transportation for evacuation or getting to a medical clinic is an important arrangement to make. Talk with case workers, connect with local services, public transportation or paratransit to identify local or private accessible transportation options in case of emergency. Keeping your gas tank topped off is a good strategy and filling up in case you have warning of impending evacuation needs is also a matter to put on a preparation to do list.

*Keep your keys handy.

Lack of clean water and/or electricity for refrigeration access is a circumstance to prepare for in emergencies.

Water needs = one gallon per person per day for at least 3-5 days; for drinking, medication and sanitation)

Do you manage a condition that means you require more water than this?

Adapt basic recommendation additions modifications for disability considerations.

Emergency supply on hand of **non-perishable food to last for at least 3 days** is recommended

Maintain a **supply of vital medications in advance of an emergency** event when possible. Collect ice and coolers in case refrigeration needed to store medications is compromised. And after a natural disaster inspect all drugs in case they have been affected by fire, flooding, or unsafe water, or loss of refrigeration

First Aid Kit that includes **bandages, antiseptic cream and fever reducing medications** are important because disaster, emergencies are conditions ripe for injuries.

Face masks which are newly recommended and even mandated for COVID-19 infection control but have long been recommended in preparation for emergencies because many types emergency may effect air quality such as in the case of chemical explosions.

Keep several pairs of **gloves for your household** members and care teams to use in regular household tasks, care giving task and as protection from all manner of toxic substances.

Extra clothing and shoes can help maintain sanitation under difficult circumstances.

Hand soap in liquid or bar form is an important infection control tool.

Dish soap is a good product to add to your emergency preparation tool kit.

Please note that antibacterial products will not destroy viruses and they apply only to skin; not surfaces.

*While soap and water is the most effective hygiene infection control measure; **hand sanitizers with isopropyl alcohol** may be used as safe and effective substitutes when water isn't easy to access.

Beware and avoid methanol based hand sanitizing products. *The FDA has recalled such products, labeling the active ingredient methanol as potentially toxic. Many of these recalled products are imported and originate from Mexico.*

Keep a **supply of cleaning and disinfection products to include bleach, hydrogen peroxide and isopropyl alcohol and/or other EPA listed products** will help you to respond to emergencies create or maintain a healthy environment in such an event. Hydrogen peroxide is non corrosive and has no respiratory effects while bleach and alcohol may not be well tolerated by some individuals.

***Note that cleaning and disinfection are 2 distinct processes.** Cleaning prior to disinfection is an important step that conserves disinfectants and allows them to be effective. Excess surface dirt and soil break down and expend disinfecting power. Products that clean and disinfect in one step are available and will be the more expensive products

Effective disinfection requires the disinfectant remain wet or "dwell" on a surface so be certain to follow product guidelines. *For example bleach solution needs anywhere from 30 seconds to 10 minutes deactivate viruses.* **Keeping children, pets and family members with cognitive impairments safe while completing tasks requires specific planning too.**

Bleach has a shelf life of about 1 year and bleach solutions should be used within 24 hours to assure potency.

Boil water notices are common in cases of flood or earthquake. Plan for them with supplies s for **safely boiling, safely cooling and storing treated water**. Also keeping supply of bottled water and clean vessels for water collection is a good measure. *Boiling will evaporate some of the water reducing the yield of treated water.

In case you cannot boil water when an order is issued you can use regular unscented plain bleach, not color safe or with added cleaners and measured using a standard medicine dropper **to purify drinking water**

Volume of Water Amount Bleach to Add* *

1 quart/liter 2 drops

*If water is cloudy, let it settle and filter it through a clean cloth, paper towel, or coffee filter.

- Stir and let stand for 30 minutes. The water should have a slight chlorine odor. If it doesn't, repeat the dosage and let stand for another 15 minutes before use.
- If the chlorine taste is too strong, pour the water from one clean container to another and let it stand for a few hours before use.

Safe handling of chemical agents is important to avoid compounding a disaster emergency with preventable accidental injury.

Remember:

Bleach solutions **sanitize surfaces with ratio of 1 tablespoon of household chlorine bleach in 1 gallon of cool clean water.** *Hot water deactivates bleach on surface applications.

Do not mix bleach with ammonia which may be present in products such as glass cleaners. **Do not** mix bleach with acids such as urine or glass and window cleaners, some automatic dishwasher detergent rinse, some toilet bowl cleaners, some drain cleaners, some lime, calcium and rust removal products, certain types of brick and concrete cleaner because dangerous fumes may result.

[Rubbing alcohol alone can be used for cleaning](#) and in hand sanitizers, but it is flammable and can be dangerous, especially if mixed with bleach.

Lysol and bleach should not be mixed nor should 2 different types of toilet bowl cleaner.

Cleaning and disinfection practices become very important information in emergencies such as floods and in event of displacements especially now since Texans are asked to remain vigilant against coronavirus even as emergencies unfold.

Learn more about disinfection products here:

<https://cfpub.epa.gov/qiwiz/disinfectants/index.cfm>

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backup plans for what our families and neighbors and community at large will require in case of emergency; mindful of the reality that emergencies don't always start with a warning.

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What you can do to be prepared:

Keeping yourself well including well rested and well fed will prevent accidents and prepare you to act in case of emergency.

Bystanders can be very important first responders in cases of bleeding trauma injuries and more.

Stop the Bleed is a training program that can educate you on how to provide immediate response to bleeding victims. <https://www.stopthebleed.org/>

Learning CPR and keeping instructions handy is another citizen preparedness strategy that may make you a hero to a stranger and/or your own loved ones.

<https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/learn-about-our-programs>
<https://www.protrainings.com/courses/free-cpr-training>

