



Harris County Judge Ed Emmett joins a neighborhood clean-up effort after Hurricane Ike.



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[www.hcoem.org](http://www.hcoem.org)  
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**HARRIS COUNTY OFFICE OF  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

# DISASTER PREPAREDNESS GUIDE





**Ed Emmett**  
County Judge

Today, we are better prepared for a disaster than any other metropolitan area in the nation.

Harris County is a national model for emergency preparedness and response, but your family's ability to survive a disaster depends on you doing your own part to prepare for the unexpected. Whether a disaster is inconvenient or catastrophic, your family's emergency plan remains the most dependable tool to keep you safe.

Join me in helping make our community better prepared by taking these four simple steps to be ready for anything from a house fire to a terrorist attack:

Get a kit. Make a plan. Stay informed.  
Get involved.

This guide is your starting point. Along with useful information you will find helpful phone numbers, websites, and other resources to build on this common sense approach to disaster preparedness.

An involved community is a well prepared community and your family's partnership with Harris County is the foundation of our homeland security and emergency management strategy.

## KNOWING WHAT TO DO IS YOUR BEST PROTECTION AND YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.

What would you do if basic services – water, gas, electricity or telephones – were cut off? Relief workers can not reach everyone right away. Therefore, prepare before disaster strikes.

## DISASTER SUPPLY KIT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Water – At least a one week supply (One gallon per person per day)
- ☐ Food – At least a one week supply of nonperishable/canned food
- ☐ First Aid Kit
- ☐ Flashlight with extra batteries
- ☐ Battery powered radio
- ☐ Medications and special items (pain relievers, diapers, etc.)
- ☐ Tools and supplies
- ☐ Sanitation (toilet paper, personal hygiene items, etc.)
- ☐ Change of clothes and bedding
- ☐ Cash
- ☐ Important family documents (birth certificates, insurance/bank account information, etc.)
- ☐ Food, water and medicine for your pets
- ☐ Kennels or crates for pets

## HURRICANES

Hurricanes cause catastrophic damage to coastlines and several hundred miles inland. Hurricanes and tropical storms also spawn tornadoes, create storm surges along the coast and cause extensive damage from heavy rainfall.

Hurricanes are classified into five categories based on their wind speed. Categories 3, 4, and 5 are considered major hurricanes, however categories 1 and 2 are still dangerous and warrant your full attention.

**When a hurricane watch is issued by the National Weather Service and the coastal area is threatened, you should:**

- ▶ Monitor your local TV and radio stations.
- ▶ Fuel vehicles and generators.
- ▶ Check your disaster supply kit.
- ▶ Cover windows with plywood.
- ▶ Bring in all outdoor furniture, toys, and any other objects that could become missiles.
- ▶ Moor boats to a safe and secure place.
- ▶ Take pictures of property and contents for insurance purposes.
- ▶ Evacuate immediately, if advised.

**If you stay in your home during the hurricane and are not in a low-lying/storm surge area, you should:**

- ▶ Continue to monitor local TV and radio stations for updated information.
- ▶ Fill bathtubs and all available containers with water.
- ▶ Turn off utilities, if requested.
- ▶ Remain indoors in a closet, bathroom, or hallway on the lowest level of your house, away from windows.
- ▶ Cover yourself and family members with a mattress or a dining room table to protect yourself from possible flying debris.

## FLOODS & TORNADOES

**Floods are Harris County's most common natural hazard.**



Understand the terms:

### **Flood Watch:**

Flash flooding is possible.

### **Flood Warning:**

A flash flood is occurring.

**Develop a personal emergency plan for floods:**

- ▶ Determine if your area is a flood risk – if unsure; call the Harris County Permit Office at 713-956-3000.
- ▶ Check the supplies in your disaster supply kit.
- ▶ Develop an evacuation plan.
- ▶ Purchase flood insurance.

**Tornadoes are nature's most violent storms.**

Spawned from powerful thunderstorms, tornadoes can cause fatalities and devastate a neighborhood in seconds. Tornadoes strike with little or no warning. Therefore, monitor your local TV and radio stations for up-to-date information. If a tornado has been sighted in your area, go to a safe place in your home away from windows and doors. However, if you are outside or in your car, lie flat in a ditch or low-lying area.

**The only universal protection against tornadoes is an underground shelter.**





# EVACUATION

Hurricane Ike reminded Gulf Coast residents about the importance of engaging in staggered, scheduled evacuations that give our neighbors in greatest danger the opportunity to leave first – followed by those in lower risk areas.



Harris County Judge Ed Emmett working with emergency management officials.

The State of Texas has since revised contra-flow, fuel and re-entry plans to make the new staggered evacuation plan more efficient and understandable for all communities that will need to evacuate.

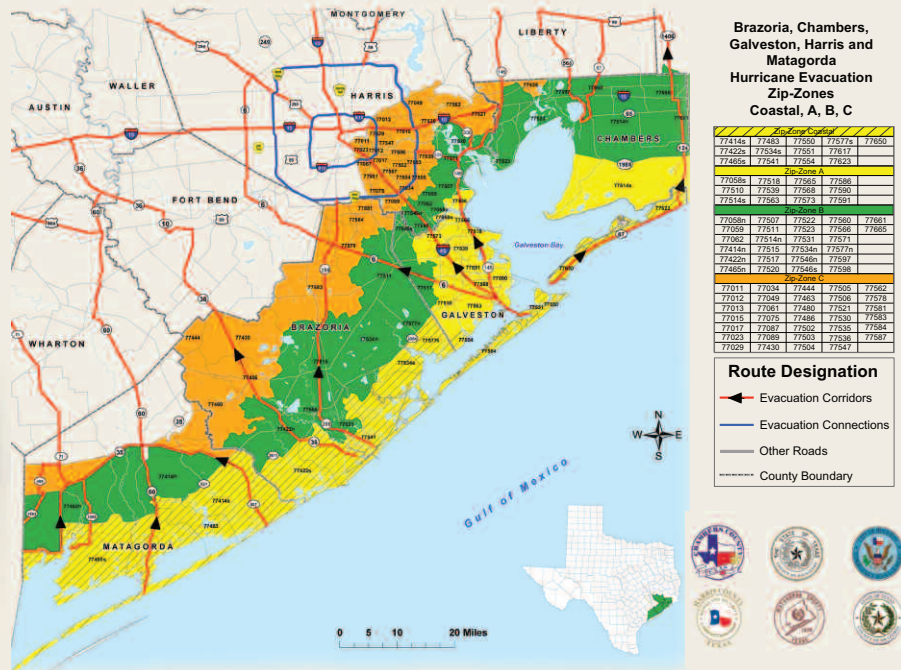
When the threat of severe weather exists, listen regularly to local radio or television stations. If the storm appears to affect your area, local officials may order or recommend that residents evacuate.

The decision to evacuate is based on information provided by the National Weather Service and local offices of emergency management. Once your local officials order an evacuation, follow instructions on when to evacuate, what to do, and where to go.

To view an evacuation map by zip code and learn how you can be a part of an improved evacuation, please visit [www.hcoem.org](http://www.hcoem.org).

- ▶ **Tune in to your local emergency radio or television station.** For the Harris County area, tune to **KTRH 740 AM** for up-to-date information.
- ▶ **People, who live in low-lying, flood prone areas or on barrier islands** may be mandated to leave because heightened seas and tides can affect their homes.
- ▶ **People who live in mobile homes near the coast, or are concerned about the structural stability of their homes,** should plan to evacuate anytime a storm threatens their area. Less powerful hurricanes can produce winds capable of damaging or destroying mobile homes.
- ▶ **People traveling with young children, elderly family members, or people with special needs,** should leave early. If you wait to leave until the general evacuation is recommended, traffic will be heavier and the weather may be worse, lengthening the time you will have to spend in your car.

## EVACUATION MAP



## SPECIAL NEEDS

People living in surge/evacuation zones without adequate transportation are classified as special needs. Those needing assistance in evacuating should contact their local office of emergency management before the beginning of hurricane season so arrangements for evacuation can be made ahead of time.

**If you know you will need assistance evacuating during a disaster, please register by dialing 2-1-1.**

**If you live in the city of Houston you may also call 3-1-1. It is important to register before a disaster actually occurs. Both 2-1-1 and 3-1-1 operate 24 hours a day to assist you.**

**PREPARATION**, which includes practice, is the key to success in dealing with a disaster.

**PREPARATION** is an ongoing process. Keep in mind that the usual means of support and assistance may not be available during an evacuation and after a disaster.



### PREPARE A PERSONAL DISASTER PLAN.

Visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) for more disaster preparedness information.

## THERE ARE SEVERAL IMPORTANT THINGS THAT CAN BE DONE IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE EFFECTS OF A DISASTER:

- ▶ **Create a “buddy system” that can help you prepare for, during and after a disaster.** Members of your support system, or “buddies,” can be roommates, relatives, neighbors, friends and co-workers. They should be people you trust to determine if you need assistance. Your support-system members should know your capabilities and needs, and be able to help in a matter of minutes.
- ▶ **Prepare your individual disaster plan.** Create an emergency contact list (contact information for your doctors, emergency out-of-town contacts, and your support system) and a medical information list (name of medical provider, list of medications, allergies, and copies of health insurance card).
- ▶ **Gather the supplies you will need before, during, and after a disaster.** Your disaster supply kit should also include supplies specific to your disability (writing or hearing devices, source of oxygen with flow regulator, additional supply of medication, urinary supplies, wheelchair, walker, etc...).
- ▶ **Make sure your residence is as safe as possible in the event of an emergency.** One of the best ways to reduce damages from a disaster, as well as to avoid possible injuries, is to prepare your residence before a disaster (remove furniture or other items that may block your escape route, keep a battery powered light near you in case of power outage, and bring in any outdoor items which may be tossed or blown around).

## HAZARDOUS MATERIAL INCIDENTS

Chemicals are a part of our everyday lives. They can help fuel our cars, keep our surroundings clean, and help keep our food fresh. Therefore, hazardous material incidents can occur nearly anywhere chemicals are used, stored, or transported from one place to another. The best way to protect yourself when an accident happens is to be prepared.

During a hazardous material incident, you may be asked by local officials to “shelter in place” instead of trying to evacuate. Staying indoors until the emergency is over may be much safer than going outside where the air may be unsafe to breathe.



## TERRORISM

While there is no way to predict what will happen, or what your personal circumstances will be, there are simple things you can do now to prepare yourself and your loved ones.

### BE PREPARED

**Maintain your normal routine.** Be alert to problems and aware of your surroundings, but don't let fear overwhelm or impede your daily life and schedule.

**Take precautions when traveling.** Do not accept packages from strangers when traveling or leave luggage unattended.

**Locate emergency exits.** Learn where emergency exits are in public areas.

**Learn first aid.** Contact your local hospital, fire department, or American Red Cross chapter for information about CPR and first aid classes.

**Pay attention to the media.** If something occurs, you will be more aware of information that could help you avoid a dangerous situation. The media will also provide you with pertinent information and the precautions you need to take.

## STEPS FOR SHELTERING IN PLACE

- ▶ Go inside and stay calm
- ▶ Close all doors, windows, and other sources of outside air.
- ▶ Tune in to your local emergency radio or television station. For the Harris County area, tune to KTRH 740 AM for up-to-date information.
- ▶ Turn off air conditioning or heating systems, and close the fireplace damper to keep chemical vapors from entering.
- ▶ Ceiling fans or rotary fans inside the building may be safely used to keep cool.
- ▶ Stay off the telephone. Do not call police, fire, or 9-1-1 unless you are reporting a police, fire, or medical emergency at your location.
- ▶ Overloaded telephone circuits may keep actual emergency calls from getting through.

## STEPS FOR EVACUATION

- ▶ If you are told to evacuate, do so immediately.
- ▶ Stay calm and gather your disaster supply kit.
- ▶ Don't forget to take care of your pets before leaving.
- ▶ Keep all windows and air vents in the car closed.
- ▶ Use the routes specified by emergency officials.





# PHONE NUMBERS

In case of hazardous material incidents or any other emergencies...

## REMINDER TO PARENTS

- If you have children in school:
- ▶ DO NOT go to the school to pick up your child unless you are told to do so by school officials. If you go to the school, you may be putting yourself and your child in danger.
  - ▶ DO NOT try to call your child's school. If there is an emergency, phone lines will be needed for official business.
  - ▶ Students will be taken into schools and cared for or evacuated to a safe location.

## BE READY!

Knowing what to do protects you and your family!

Evacuation Assistance  
Registration  
2-1-1  
[www.unitedwayhouston.org](http://www.unitedwayhouston.org)  
3-1-1 (in Houston)  
[www.houstontx.gov](http://www.houstontx.gov)  
Harris County  
713-755-5000  
[www.co.harris.tx.us](http://www.co.harris.tx.us)  
County Judge Ed Emmett  
713-755-4000  
[www.judgeemmett.org](http://www.judgeemmett.org)  
Harris County Office of  
Homeland Security &  
Emergency Management  
713-881-3100  
[www.hcoem.org](http://www.hcoem.org)  
Telecommunication Device  
for the Deaf (TDD)  
713-881-3099  
Commissioner Precinct 1  
El Franco Lee  
713-991-6881  
[www.co.harris.tx.us/comm\\_lee](http://www.co.harris.tx.us/comm_lee)  
Commissioner Precinct 2  
Sylvia R. Garcia  
713-455-0062  
[www.co.harris.tx.us/comm\\_Garcia](http://www.co.harris.tx.us/comm_Garcia)  
Commissioner Precinct 3  
Steve Radack  
281-463-6300  
[www.co.harris.tx.us/Pct3](http://www.co.harris.tx.us/Pct3)  
Commissioner Precinct 4  
Jerry Eversole  
281-353-8424  
[www.hcp4.net](http://www.hcp4.net)  
Sheriff Office Adrian Garcia  
713-221-6000  
[www.hcso.hctx.net](http://www.hcso.hctx.net)

Harris County Fire Marshall's  
Office  
281-436-8000  
[www.hcfmo.net](http://www.hcfmo.net)  
Motorist Assistance Program  
CALL MAP  
713-225-5627  
**\*MAP or \*627**  
Flood Control District  
713-684-4000  
[www.hcfcd.org](http://www.hcfcd.org)  
Traffic Signal Repair  
(state owned roadways)  
713-881-3210  
Metropolitan Transit Authority  
(METRO)  
713-739-4000  
[www.ridemetro.org](http://www.ridemetro.org)  
METRO POLICE  
713-224-2677  
**#MPD (#673)**  
[mpdservices@ridemetro.com](mailto:mpdservices@ridemetro.com)  
Bus Route/Schedule  
Information  
713-635-4000  
[www.ridemetro.org](http://www.ridemetro.org)  
METRO Lift Information  
713-225-0119  
[www.ridemetro.org](http://www.ridemetro.org)  
METRO Assistance Center  
713-658-0180  
[www.ridemetro.org](http://www.ridemetro.org)  
Texas Department of  
Transportation  
713-802-5000  
[www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)  
Traffic Signal Repair  
713-802-5662

Road Construction  
Information  
713-802-5074  
[www.roadworks.houston-transtar.org](http://www.roadworks.houston-transtar.org)  
Road Conditions  
713-802-5000  
[www.txdot.gov/travel/road\\_conditions.htm](http://www.txdot.gov/travel/road_conditions.htm)  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
(FBI)  
713-693-5000  
<http://houston.fbi.gov>  
Houston TranStarTours  
713-881-3000  
[www.houstontranstar.com](http://www.houstontranstar.com)  
American Red Cross  
713-526-8300  
[www.houstonredcross.org](http://www.houstonredcross.org)  
United Way  
2-1-1  
[www.unitedwayhouston.org](http://www.unitedwayhouston.org)  
Salvation Army  
713-752-0677  
[www.salvationarmyhouston.org](http://www.salvationarmyhouston.org)  
Center Point Energy  
CALL BEFORE YOU DIG  
8-1-1  
[www.centerpointenergy.org](http://www.centerpointenergy.org)  
Harris County Animal Control  
281-999-3191  
[www.hcphe.org/vph](http://www.hcphe.org/vph)  
Houston Society for  
the Prevention of Cruelty  
to Animals (SPCA)  
713-869-7722  
[www.houstonspca.org](http://www.houstonspca.org)

## Houston TranStar

When emergency situations occur such as hurricanes, floods, industrial explosions, or terrorist attacks, the Harris County Emergency Operations Center housed at Houston TranStar is activated. Representatives from four partner agencies (the Texas Department of Transportation, Harris County, the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, and the City of Houston) come together to coordinate a quick and efficient response. Some of the technologies employed to address emergency situations include the Automated Flood Warning System, Doppler Radar Imagery, Satellite Weather Maps, Road Flood Warning Systems, HAM Radio, the Regional Incident Management System, and much more. Visit [www.houstontranstar.org](http://www.houstontranstar.org) for more information.



## WEBSITES

Harris County  
[www.co.harris.tx.us](http://www.co.harris.tx.us)

Harris County Homeland Security  
& Emergency Management  
[www.hcoem.org](http://www.hcoem.org)

Harris County Citizen Corps  
[www.harriscountycitizencorps.com](http://www.harriscountycitizencorps.com)

City of Houston Emergency Management  
[www.houstonoem.net](http://www.houstonoem.net)

Houston TranStar  
[www.houstontranstar.org](http://www.houstontranstar.org)

Texas Division of Emergency Management  
[www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem)

Texas Prepares  
[www.texasprepares.org](http://www.texasprepares.org)

National Weather Service  
[www.srh.noaa.gov/hgx](http://www.srh.noaa.gov/hgx)

US Department of Homeland Security  
[www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov)  
[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

Think.Act.Survive  
[www.survivedisaster.org](http://www.survivedisaster.org)

American Red Cross (Houston chapter)  
[www.houstonredcross.org](http://www.houstonredcross.org)

Harris County Animal Control  
[www.countypets.com](http://www.countypets.com)