



Southwestern Regional Event
Readiness for Preparedness: The Galveston Model for Evacuation and Recovery
Galveston, TX
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ABSTRACT

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LeBlanc Re: Galveston Evacuation Plan

Inform the community at large about emergency preparedness plans throughout the year:

Inform the community at select times throughout the year through town hall meetings; emergency management coordination; the public information channel and city website; and sign-up meetings for individuals with special needs. During hurricane season hold monthly or more frequent meetings with community and county stakeholders to review respective plans and necessary collaboration.

Conduct tabletop exercises:

In recognition of the direct correlation between practicing a plan and successful performance of the plan in case of disaster, conduct tabletop exercises to review all aspects of the readiness and response plan of action especially with respect to evacuation and acknowledgment of lines of authority.

Establish a timeline for response:

Firstly establish the estimated time that the storm would make landfall and refer to that time as the zero hour, or H-zero and with that basis assign tasks along a timeline. Tasks in the Galveston timeline include: H-100 - hour regional leadership conference; H-100 hour to H-72 - leadership handoff from City Council to Mayor; H-72 - voluntary evacuation, care of special needs population, and implementation of reverse 911 system; H-48 - mandatory evacuation; H-24 - relocation of remaining City staff, police, fire, public works and emergency management staff to safe havens with reserves of fuel, food and supplies.

Establish continuity of government through redundant commands and facilities: To

preserve continuity in case of loss of communication or control relocate the Mayor Pro Tem and the Assistant City Manager to the mainland's county emergency management facility to serve as the backup team. Establish agreements with other entities as may be necessary to access redundant emergency management facilities for post storm operations.

Assisting special needs evacuees: Prepare an evacuation plan to assist special needs persons including those without transportation, the bedridden, homebound, homeless,

drug addicts, those requiring oxygen, or those without family. The pre-plan should include buses with bathrooms and city staff to accompany special needs evacuees on long trips, a staging area, and additional transportation as may be required and provided by emergency management services.

Pre-plan evacuation destinations: Pre-establish agreements as necessary with authorities in evacuation destinations to house evacuees appropriately.

Provide training for city staff to accompany evacuees: Train sufficient personnel or (up to 50) city staff to accompany and provide appropriate care for (3,500) special needs evacuees.

Ensure that the mandatory evacuation plan includes a plan to evacuate family pets and abandoned pets: Ensure that evacuation plans include transportation for and destination shelters for pets. Transport abandoned pets and pre-arrange care for abandoned pets at the destination city(ies) with the Humane Society.

Establish a refuge of last resort: Establish a local agreement with a facility such as school district to serve as refuge of last resort for citizens who refuse to evacuate under mandatory evacuation. Citizens who choose this option must sign waivers acknowledging all risks even death.

Establish mutual aid agreements with neighboring cities: Establish mutual aid agreements with neighboring cities to encourage local response as the first response.

Establish redundant communication systems: Ensure ample supply of two-way radios and satellite phones for emergency managers and local leaders as cell phone transmissions are unreliable post disaster and it is likely that the user will suffer loss of battery power.

Manage media inquiries with daily press conferences to communicate key messages to citizens: To effectively manage time with the media to communicate key storm status messages to the public, establish set daily times to speak to the media such as 10:00 o'clock in the morning and at 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon, rather than respond to media inquiries throughout the day.

Protect the city's water supply: Take the necessary steps to protect the water source as water is essential to support human life and to fight fires. Protect the water source by cutting off the water supply to avoid the risk of bleeding the system and contamination through broken lines. When turning the water back take the time necessary to test to be sure that the supply has not reverse contaminated itself.

Keep your emergency plan flexible: Bear in mind that emergency plan flexibility may be necessary to effectively respond to unexpected situations.

To save three structures of the east end historic district from a fire during Rita's 90 mile an hour winds we broke policy during the bunker down mode to allow willing firefighters to fight a fire to save the historic district. Additionally, our neighbor cities in mutual aid agreement with us came to Galveston during this period to protect the rest of the city in case of fire.

Plan for cleanup redundancy: A redundant cleanup plan should entail multiple contracts. Our city maintains three contracts and an additional agreement with a company to manage the three debris management companies so that the proper paperwork is in order to be reimbursed by FEMA.

Be prepared to readily assess damages in order to expedite recovery: Be prepared with resources including software to efficiently assess and track damages.

Establish a plan to restore utilities and power: Establish a plan for restoration of utilities and power in priority order for critical community providers including hospitals, command centers, select grocery stores and retailers, gas stations, and fuel vendors.

Establish 90 day reserves for all city funds: To maintain continuity post disaster establish 90 day reserves for all city funds including the water, sewer, drainage, enterprise and general funds. These funds will preserve continuity in a number of ways including that FEMA reimburses based on expenditures.

“Galveston, I’m proud to say is a shining example of long term readiness and preparedness.”: Our forefathers planned for a sufficient water storage supply to enable survive for days without water coming to the island. This water storage system continues to serve us well. Our forefathers also constructed the seawall that has protected this island for 100 years.

“The greatest lesson is to share; exactly what you’re doing. Share with others, go visit other communities, find out their successes, their failures.”: Galveston has done just that and will continue to do that.

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Sexton Re: UTMB’s Hospital Evacuation Plan

Convert lessons learned or observed from other disasters into best practices or your emergency preparedness plan: Think about implementing a preparedness or response plan differently or adapting a plan when observing or experiencing inefficiencies in disaster preparedness or response. Improve procedures and policies related to a critical issue such as sending hospital evacuees with complete medical records. Train citizenry who evacuate of their own free will to travel with one’s personal medication record.

Send evacuees with medical history and medication information: To enable the receiving medical team to properly care for a patient, especially the sickest of the sick, develop a system for sending critical medical records and medication information with every evacuee.

A hospital should open an incident command center and declare a state of emergency at the time of evacuation: Send non-essential individuals home such as students and faculty. Send essential people home to give them the opportunity to take care of their loved ones and their living accommodations and ask them to return by 8:00 o’clock the next morning. Stay overnight in the hospital as needed to prepare for possible or imminent evacuation.

Do not evacuate the hospital and patients until necessary: Avoid evacuation until necessary especially given the critical care required for patients on life support.

Send word to nurses and our physicians to prepare the patients in case of evacuation with guiding principles: The guiding principles of the Galveston Evacuation were: Do what's in the best interest of patients at all times. No patient is ever to be lost. Move the sicker of the sick first and then take care of employees, and facilities. Copy medical records. Gather medications. Identify patients on their bodies and other appropriate ways so that in the event of evacuation the patient is accompanied with proper identification and medical records so that the receiving party is able to take proper care.

Set up staging areas to move transport patients: Set up staging areas for both ground transport from one door and another staging area at another door for patients who are to be air-lifted.

Establish and perform patient checklist at three junctures before evacuating: Conduct the checklist to establish the patient identification; status of the patient such as sickest of the sick, mode of transportation, transport companion if any, medical record, family notification record, and evacuation destination. Conduct checklist three times; at the bedside with the physicians and nurses, again at the exit of the hospital, and one final time as the patient is put on that transport.

Maintain emergency preparedness plan flexibility: A plan may call for hunkering down and staying in one place. Yet when considering how to care for the sickest of the sick post disaster, without infrastructure, it may be best to adjust the plan and evacuate.

Delegate to those with decisive leadership skills: Delegate authority to those with decisive leadership skills to ensure a successful evacuation each step of the way.

Request the State's assistance with aircraft to evacuate remaining employees: After the sickest of the sick have been evacuated from the hospital contact the Governor to request an airlift for remaining employees after the sickest of the sick have been evacuated.

Assign volunteer employees to keep emergency room operations open: Assign volunteer employees to provide emergency operations, at least the services of an urgent care center, for those remaining behind.

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Strain Re: Galveston Housing Authority Evacuation Plan

Thoroughly review one's evacuation plan on an annual basis: Generate new ideas through discussion. Revise partner Memorandums of Understanding such as with bus services and shelter facilities.

Identify essential employees who will need to return to the island when the hurricane is over and how to return them: Train and retrain employees in this regard.

At evacuation time dispatch the resident services team to notify residents: The team will deliver a letter to each resident to advise regarding the evacuation bus departure time and how much luggage each resident can bring.

Assign staff to accompany residents, especially those with medical needs, to the bus, to the shelter and to stay in the shelter.

Equip employees who will accompany residents on evacuation with a backpack including walkie talkies, emergency money, and a list of residents whom they are accompanying:

Evacuate when possible upon early notification to avoid traffic jams:

Evacuate the finance director with important records to ensure continuity of operations: The finance director should evacuate with records backup information, blank checks; cash; and copies of all deeds, insurance policies, and everything needed to be able to establish operations in another location.

Move the computer server off of the island to maintain access to resident records: Move the server off island to ensure the ability to access housing authority resident records and to communicate with other housing authorities and HUD to find places to house people if returning to the island is not possible.

Allow for the maintenance director to stay at the island community center to direct employees and to assist people from the City with their evacuation process until it is time to board up and go:

Prepare for returning to one's community after evacuation: Purchase and share groceries. Be receptive to a sister city's help with temporary housing and other support.

Maintain flexibility with one's emergency response plan: Plans provide a framework for decision making when disaster circumstances are off plan:

Maintain partnerships in one's emergency response plan:

Factor into the response plan the knowledge that under current law not all public housing authority residents will leave when a mandatory evacuation is called:

Double the amount of essential staff performing various tasks during the evacuation period due to the extreme demands of an evacuation scenario:

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Blazyk, Hale Re: Special Needs Evacuation Plan

To develop the Mayor's Citizen Response Team to identify the special needs evacuees and volunteers a process must be established:

With your city's commitment and support to developing the Citizen Response Team (CRT), begin to identify a core group of volunteers to help expand the volunteer base.

Develop initial protocols and forms including volunteer registration forms, evacuee registration forms and a telephone script for volunteers when contacting potential evacuees.

Publicize the citizen response team initiative for special needs evacuees. Set up a designated telephone number and reception at City Hall for citizens who need evacuation assistance.

CRT volunteers should take responsibility for contacting enrolled evacuees to update the qualification of needs, and register new evacuees in preparation for a future evacuation.

Following a mandatory evacuation order, volunteers should contact the residents that requested transportation to the shelter to obtain more specific information about the size of the household, number and the ages of the children, number and type of pets, and advice as to what to bring with them.

Pre-arrange transportation for residents with very special needs that could not be transported on a regular City bus or school bus.

Organize the evacuee data efficiently for use by the transit department of the City.

Deliver special needs data to the City so that transportation or buses can be assigned by City sections.

After the evacuee data is collected send volunteers home to prepare for the evacuation themselves.

Buses should bring evacuees to the City staging area or collection center.

Use School buses and volunteer bus drivers for backup transportation.

Expect that the number of potential special needs evacuees may be much larger than estimated by your emergency management personnel. There may be more people at the houses where you go to pick up people than are anticipated.

Expect that extended families may want to stay together.

Remind evacuees to bring needed medications, medical equipment, bedding or clothing.

Anticipate that evacuees will not leave without their pets.

Anticipate that evacuees with mental health problems or other behavioral disorders may prove disruptive and difficult to manage during the chaos of an evacuation.

Anticipate that some residential care facilities may not have proper plans for evacuation and may suddenly request to use the city's transportation means.

Anticipate that volunteer availability may be an issue. You may lose some volunteers that you're counting on they're being told to leave as early as possible. Expect that it may be more difficult to enroll potential evacuees after a quiet year or after a difficult evacuation experience.

Volunteers need to be trained and certified. Conduct background checks on volunteers. Plan on continual communication with your volunteers.

Protect the rights of evacuees, particularly those with medical issues. Understand that Medical information is confidential.

Organize a sound database to track the special needs evacuees and volunteers.

Expect to improvise. No matter how good your plans are, you're going to run into some issues that you simply can't anticipate. Communication and ability flexibility are important when developing and implementing a plan.

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Yarbrough Re: Intergovernmental & Transportation Readiness to Recover

Commit public leadership to a philosophy of recovery:

Make emergency management a high priority, part of continuous planning, and commit to practice to make perfect. Make incremental progress by improving protocols and communication for next time. Don't spend time reinventing the wheel. Make personal plans, be ready.

Offer evacuation options and support for citizens during evacuation:

Citizens may choose any route given the farm-to-market lateral road system. Initiate contra flow on the highway system from the beginning of the evacuation. Convert the toll way systems during evacuation to free highways. The state may supply fuel bladders to provide gas for citizens to get to next exit.

Focus on enhanced communication between coordinating entities:

Coordinate between cities. Identify a coordinating person or liaison to keep communication lines open between the counties and major cities.

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Kempner Re: Finance Readiness to Recover:

Consider and enable the economic drivers of community recovery:

Provide temporary housing post disaster for those who want to return to get their businesses or institutions up and running, whether a cruise ship, trailers or space. Structure permit ordinances to expedite building of temporary and permanent housing.

Budget and manage to develop sufficient emergency reserves, such as to sustain for three months, to handle the cost of obligations post disaster.

Establish tax incentives to attract return and new businesses.

Create a lending pool for cities ahead of time.

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Sjostrom Re: Business Readiness to Recover

The business community must create tools and resources and pre-plan for business recovery post disaster while city managers focus on public safety, infrastructure and communications, both internally and externally:

Business owners must prepare before an event in order to mitigate financial hardships and psychological strain encountered post storm.

Pre-plan by accelerating the permit process to expedite a business owner's ability to rebuild.

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Cernak Re: Port Readiness to Recover

When shutting down a port due to an impending natural disaster take the following steps to ensure a safe and prompt reopening:

Secure potential projectiles, such as container cranes, railway cars, and other industrial equipment such as cameras, to curb potential damage to the Port. The Port will be needed for post disaster delivery of supplies. Port staff must preserve or protect the public health and safety of the residents for both the Port property and adjacent property owners, while also reopening as quickly as possible post disaster.

Provide a safe haven for smaller vessel in slips blocked by barges.

Develop communication redundancies.

Coordinate with neighboring ports in the area to develop cooperative plans.

Act as the interface to agencies and to the outside world during the storm.

When reopening the port post disaster to assist with recovery:

Prepare for the Army Corps of Engineers had to do a survey of the channel to be sure the channel is clear from obstruction.

Conduct manual security patrols until fully reopened.

Prepare to receive a large number of passengers or take the role as the point of disembarkation for evacuees from other locations. Prepare to house displaced persons that arrive via the port.

Before reopening ensure that port facilities remain secure.

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Richardson Re: Medical Institutional Readiness to Recover

Conduct an annual hazard vulnerability analysis:

List all potential natural disasters and man-made events. Use that analysis every year to establish the agenda for preparing for emergencies.

In case of weather emergencies prepare a place to continue to train medical students, and to store valuable research specimens, and valuable research data. Create a detailed plan for dealing with weather emergencies as it impacts the clinical enterprise, research enterprise and educational enterprise.

Develop a Hurricane Evacuation Assistance Team of healthcare providers to assist special needs evacuees during transportation and at the shelter.

During evacuation leave a group of about 50 physicians and nurses to man the emergency room.

Develop plan to take care of the staff who take care of the patients at the hospital.

Prepare to care for petrochemical injuries from toxic chemicals that create trauma and severe burns.

Prepare to care for biological injuries.

Prepare to care for those with communicable diseases.

Prepare plans with flexibility and redundancy:

The worth of the program or the worth of leadership is the system that can self-operate without the leader's presence.