

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

to *Picking Up The Pieces: Restoring Rural Housing and Communities After a Disaster*

Hurricane Harvey Disaster Guide

Housing Assistance Council
August 28, 2017

Hurricane Harvey hit the Gulf Coast on Friday, largely affecting the Houston metro area and southwestern Louisiana. While it has been downgraded from a category 3 hurricane to a tropical storm, it is slow moving and continues to drop rain on the area, exacerbating flooding conditions. Around 30 inches of rain has fallen in parts of Harris County and some areas could reach 50 inches of rain so flooding is the main cause for concern. More than 30,000 people are expected to be displaced and 450,000 to file for assistance because of the storm. The entire Texas National Guard has been activated, deploying 12,000 guardsmen.¹

The following guide provides information for individuals and families dealing with direct housing loss and damage from Hurricane Harvey. For more information, please see HAC's report: *Picking up the Pieces: Restoring Rural Housing and Communities After a Disaster* available for free online at http://www.ruralhome.org/storage/documents/disaster_guide_2012.pdf.

If your house is inaccessible or currently uninhabitable, emergency, transient housing exists to provide immediate shelter for those in need. Organizations and resources available to assist with emergency transient housing include the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Church World Service, Mennonite Disaster Service, and state and city run emergency shelters aimed at housing victims of Hurricane. If you are in need of emergency, transient housing, you can text SHELTER and your Zip Code to 43362 (4FEMA) to find where the shelter closest to you is located.²

FEMA has made available temporary assistance funding available for residents of counties affected by Hurricane Matthew. Temporary assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster. To see if you are eligible for funding, you can apply online at <http://www.disasterassistance.gov/> or call FEMA's toll-free helpline at **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)**. When applying, make sure to have a pen and paper as well as the following information: your social security number, current and pre-disaster address, a telephone number where you can be contacted, insurance information, total household income, a routing and account number from your bank if you are interested in having disaster assistance funds transferred directly into your bank account, and a description of your losses that were caused by the disaster.

Only call 911 if you have an immediate need for medical attention or evacuation assistance.

¹ <http://www.cnn.com/2017/08/28/us/texas-harvey-latest/index.html>

² Please see FEMA's webpage, for more information. Available online at: <http://www.fema.gov/>.

- If you can't get through to 911 on first try, keep calling.
- Another option is to place a call to one of five numbers for the Houston Command Center of the United States Coast Guard. The numbers are:
 - 281-464-4851
 - 281-464-4852
 - 281-464-4853
 - 281-464-4854
 - 282-464-4855³

3-1-1 for the Houston area and 2-1-1 have been inundated with calls. Please stay on the line. If you cannot get through, call again. Heavy rainfall is expected for the next several days. Monitor latest rainfall amounts at www.harriscountyfws.org.

- Turn Around, Don't Drown! ® DO NOT DRIVE through high water and DO NOT DRIVE AROUND BARRICADES! Just 2 feet of water can sweep your vehicle away.
- DO NOT WALK through flood waters. Just 6 inches of moving water can knock you down.
- If your home floods, STAY THERE. You are safer at home than trying to navigate flooded streets on foot.
- If floodwaters rise around your car but the water is NOT MOVING, abandon the car and move to higher ground. Do not leave the car and enter MOVING water.
- STAY AWAY from streams, rivers, and creeks during heavy rainfall. These areas can flood quickly and with little warning.
- MOVE important items – especially important documents like insurance policies - to the highest possible floor. This will help protect them from flood damage.
- DISCONNECT electrical appliances and do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water. You could be electrocuted.

Download HCOHSEM's ReadyHarris mobile app (<http://bit.ly/ReadyHarrisApp>). The free app puts the power to build a personalized preparedness plan in the palm of your hand and is available for both Apple and Android devices.

This flooding event is a reminder that all residents in this area should carry flood insurance. Contact your insurance agent for more information about purchasing flood insurance, or visit the National Flood Insurance Program at www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program or call 1-888-379-9531. Please keep in mind that new insurance policies take 30 days to go into effect.

Where you can learn more:

Forecasts: [National Weather Service Houston-Galveston](#)

³ <https://www.fema.gov/hurricane-harvey>

National Hurricane Center

Flood Safety: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Harris County Flood Control District: Flood Warning System

To report home flooding, visit www.readyharris.org to complete the Harris County Home Flooding Report.

If your home has experienced damage, remember to check the outside of your home before you enter. Look for loose power lines, broken or damaged gas lines, foundation cracks, missing support beams, or other damage. It may be safest to ask a building inspector or contractor to check the structure before you enter. Do not force jammed doors open, as they may be providing needed support to the rest of the home. Sniff for gas to ensure there are no natural or propane gas leaks. If you do have a propane tank system, make sure to turn off all valves and contact a propane supplier to check the system before you use it again. Check floors and ceilings to ensure they are not sagging from water damage, this can be especially hazardous. Take photographs of any damage as you may need them for insurance claims or FEMA claims later on. ⁴

HUD offers a Disaster Recovery Toolkit and makes other related resources available:

<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/housing-counseling/topics/#disaster-recovery-toolkit>

To apply to disaster assistance funding must complete a multi-purpose application *over the phone on FEMA's toll-free national teleregistration or online.*

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):

Toll-free helpline:

1-800-621-FEMA (3362)

For hearing impaired callers only:

1-800-462-7585 (TTY)

1-800-621-3362 (Video Relay Service)

American Red Cross Disaster Service:

For referrals and updates on Red Cross shelter services in your area, locate a local Red Cross office through: <http://www.redcross.org/find-help> or by calling the Public Inquiry Center at 1-800-214-0441

State and Local Housing Agencies

Each state has at least one agency that administers state and federal programs to promote decent affordable housing for low-income individuals. Typically, these agencies and authorities administer some aspects of state or federal programs. Below is a list of state housing agencies in states impacted by Hurricane Harvey:

⁴ Excerpted from the Red Cross's Guide on "Checking Your Home: Structural Elements" available online here: <http://www.redcross.org/find-help/disaster-recovery/home-structural-elements>.

TEXAS

Houston Housing Authority
2640 Fountain View Dr.
Houston, TX 77057
(713) 260-0500
<http://www.housingforhouston.com/>

Harris County Housing Authority
8933 Interchange Dr.
Houston, TX 77054
(713) 578-2100
<http://hchatexas.org/>

Pasadena Housing Assistance
1114 Davis St.
Pasadena, TX 77506
(713) 475-5544
<http://www.ci.pasadena.tx.us/>

LOUISIANA

Lake Charles Housing Authority
800 Bilbo St.
Lake Charles, LA 70601
(337) 439-4189
<http://www.lcha004-housing.org/>

USDA Rural Development State Offices:

Texas

Daniel Torres, Acting State Director
Federal Building, Suite 102
101 South Main Temple, TX 76501
Voice: (254) 742-9700
Fax: (254) 742-9709
www.rd.usda.gov/tx

Louisiana

Karen Nardini and Lee Jones, Acting State Directors
3727 Government Street
Alexandria, LA 71302
Voice: (318) 473-7920
Fax: (844) 325-6949
www.rd.usda.gov/la