

JIM WELLS COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

ALL HAZARDS GUIDE

▲ PLAN ▲ PREPARE ▲ PASS IT ON



JIM WELLS COUNTY EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS INFORMATION GUIDE

THE FIRST 72 HOURS ARE UP TO YOU!!

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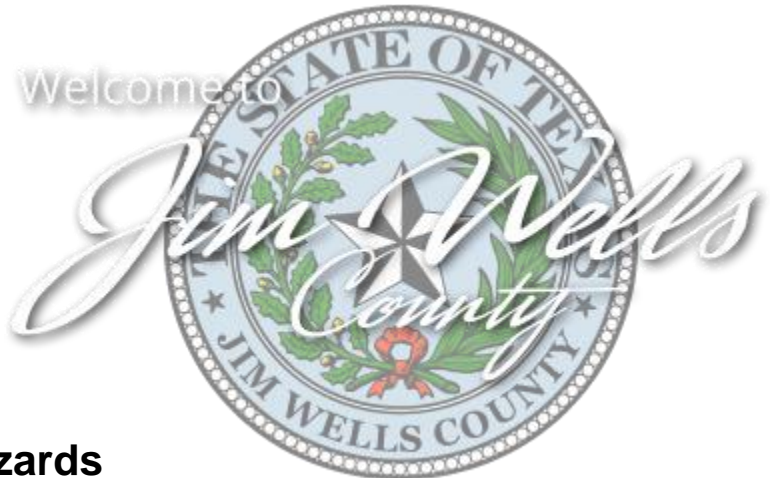
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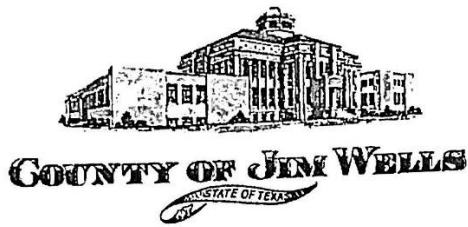
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Dear Residents and Guests of Jim Wells County:

This All-Hazards Guide is your ready reference guide to help you, your family, and your business prepare for those dangerous and potentially deadly days caused by Mother Nature such as floods, fires, hurricanes, and tornadoes. These are just some of the natural disasters that affect Jim Wells County.

Listening to local radio, television, government information, and NOAA weather radio becomes more important than ever to help ensure your safety, especially with a significant hurricane that could potentially impact our county.

In addition to the information that you'll find in this guide, please take a few minutes to visit the Jim Wells County Emergency Management's website at <https://www.co.jim-wells.tx.us/page/co.county.emc>. We have a number of great web links and interesting information available to help you become better prepared to take care of yourself, family and property. It is essential to take personal responsibility and be proactive in your disaster preparedness and evacuation efforts to be as disaster-resistant as possible. We strongly recommend that you make sure that you have a battery-powered radio and NOAA Weather Radio to help you stay informed about current conditions, evacuations routes and shelters.

Jim Wells County is blessed with a number of professionals who are representatives of the county and not-for-profit disaster response partners such as the American Red Cross that have offered assistance in the event a disaster strikes our area. We extend our support to our responders and these agencies who go beyond the call of duty who donate their time, talents and resources to help support our communities during times of need. Also, volunteering your time during emergency and non-emergency situations will no doubt be a rewarding experience during difficult times.

Stay Ready, Stay Safe, and Stay Informed...

Juan. J. Acuña, Jr.

Coordinator, Jim Wells County Emergency Management

Plan! Prepare! Pass it on!

Creating an Emergency Disaster Plan for you and your family does not have to be an overwhelming, or time consuming endeavor.

On any ordinary day you may have some ideas about the hazards in your community that put you at risk, and how you would respond to those risks if they became actual emergencies. The key is to write down those hazards and your response plan(s).



PLAN!

Every good planning idea starts with assessing your risk. All of this accounts on where you live – in the country, in the state, and in your county. As a Texas resident, the risks that we primarily have to deal with come from naturally occurring incidents that include thunderstorms, lightning, structure fires, tornadoes, fresh water flooding, drought, wildland fire, tropical storms and hurricanes.

Many of these risks are common and require small or minimal response on your part (e.g. staying indoors, clearing brush from around your home or watering restrictions). A few however; are not as frequent and when they occur, the effects are widespread and may even require you to evacuate to another building, or other areas of the state.

Once you've made a list of the hazards you face, the next step is to evaluate what you need in order to respond to those hazards. For more common and "smaller" hazards this can be as simple as having a designated meeting place and phone number for family members to call should you become separated, an evacuation map of your home in case of a fire, and a family/friend/hotel/motel nearby you will stay at in case your home is damaged.

However, for the larger, less frequently occurring hazards you may encounter, a bit more planning will be needed because they also have the potential to affect your entire community. It is for these events that you need to have supplies (i.e. food, water, medicine, etc.) and copies of your important papers. You will also need to consider where you will shelter out of the area, and if you have pets, whether they can shelter with you. It is also important to plan for a place to temporarily call home in the event that your home is destroyed and resources are limited in your community afterwards.

PREPARE!

Before you realize it, you have written your plan. Now that you have identified what you will need to survive the hazards you have identified, take a look around your home. Ask yourself: “Do we already have the supplies we need?” Check your pantry, is there enough food for 3 days that does not need to be cooked? If you have food that needs to be cooked, do you have a gas or charcoal grill that you can use outside your home to cook with? As you go through your list of supplies, try to identify items that you can purchase in little amounts throughout the year in order to spread out the cost.

PASS IT ON!

You have a PLAN. You have taken your inventory of supplies and are preparing. Now you can Pass It On by sitting down with your family to talk through your Emergency Disaster Plan. Share the Plan for each type of hazard, the expected response, and where important documents, including the Plan, and supplies are located. Make sure to include any family or friends located out of the area, which have a role in your Plan, in the conversation. Encourage co-workers, friends and the other family members to take a little time out of their day to write down their Emergency Disaster Plan. Review your employer’s Emergency Disaster Plan to ensure you know what is expected of you during an emergency, and if it may affect your Family Emergency Disaster Plan.

PLAN ✓ (done)

PREPARE ✓ (done)

Pass It On ✓ (on-going)



NOW WHAT?

Enjoy everything that Jim Wells County has to offer each day, practice your Emergency Disaster Plan with your family at least once a year, and review our Emergency Disaster Plan at least once a year for any changes or additions. It is important to include your children in the practice and review of the plan so the children know how to respond and stay calm when enacting the Plan in real life. When there are hazards that threaten your community, listen to your local Emergency Management Agency and activate your Family Emergency Disaster Plan accordingly.

Most importantly: Evacuate when ordered to do so by your Local Emergency Management Agency. Also check with your local Emergency Management Agency for Family Emergency Disaster Plan assistance, and ask if they have a fill-in-the-blank template you can use to make it even easier to complete.

If you have a family member or members that live in an Assisted Living Facility, or Nursing Home, it is important to know what the Facility’s Emergency Plan covers. Make sure to ask questions on how their Emergency Plan is put into action and don’t be afraid to ask for a copy of their Emergency Plan, as it is required to have.

Knowledge is not enough to protect you, your family or your home. You must put this information to work. Don't wait until the storm is nearly here, or it will catch you off-guard and then it will be too late!

Prepare an All-Hazards Supply Kit for Emergency

Get a Kit!

Having a basic survival kit on-hand to sustain yourself and your family after an emergency is an essential part of preparation.

Think about basic survival needs: fresh water, food, clean air and warmth. Store your supplies in a portable container as close as possible to an exit and review the contents of your kit at least once a year.



Include in your kit:

- 3-day supply of water: 1 gallon per person per day but you made need more; consult with your doctor
- 3-day supply of non-perishable food that meets your dietary requirements
- Manual can opener or pop top cans/containers and eating utensils
- Medical equipment and assistive devices
- Medications and a list of prescription name, dosage, frequency, and a doctor contact information
- Cooler with an ice pack if medications need to be refrigerated
- Medical alert tags or bracelets to identify your disability-related needs
- Supplies for a service animal or pets including 3-day supply of food and water, ID tags, proof of vaccinations and veterinarian contact information
- Flashlight
- Portable, battery-powered radio (preferably NOAA Weather Radio_
- Extra batteries
- Basic first aid kit and manual
- Warm clothing and blankets depending on the time of year
- Whistle
- Filter face masks (dust mask)



- List of emergency contact information
- Photocopies of important documents such as birth certificates, license, insurance information, etc.
- Cash and coins as ATM's may be out of service
- Sanitation hygiene items such as hand sanitizer, denture care, moist towelettes, absorbent pads, toilet paper and feminine hygiene products, etc.
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper: 9 parts water to 1 part bleach to 1 gallon of water can be used to treat water in an emergency (do not use scented, color safe, or bleaches with added cleaners)
- Items for infants such as formula, diapers, bottles and pacifiers

Supply kits are a good start, but depending on your situation, you may need more or less items to survive an emergency. Another good idea is to use a suitcase with rollers to make it easier on yourself and your family.

Also if you don't feel like shopping for these items separately, you can purchase them online or at local stores in your area.

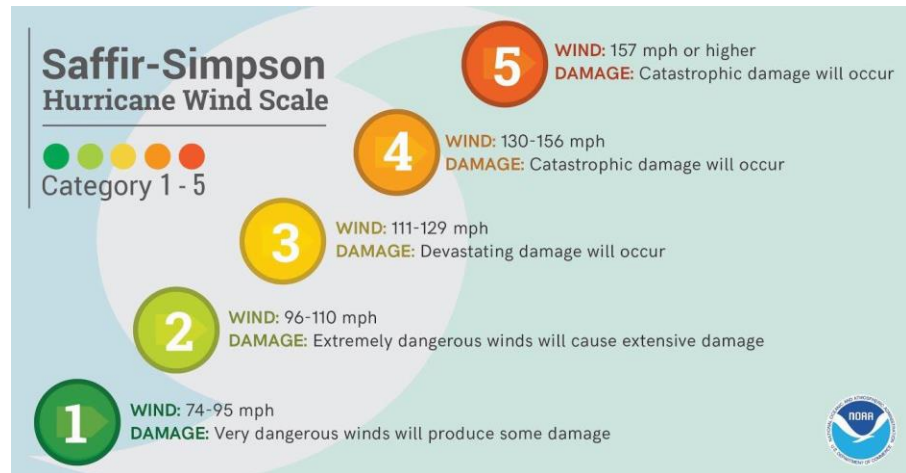
Finally, you need to understand that emergency responders may not be able to get to you right away and having a kit will help you between the period of time you are rescued after a disaster.

Hopefully you will not have to EVER use the kit you put together. However, are you willing to risk being unprepared when a natural disaster occurs??



The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale

This scale provides examples of the type of damage and impact in the United States associated with winds of the indicated intensity. The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale provides information on wind impacts only and does not provide commentary or information on the impact or characteristics associated with tropical cyclones.



Category One Hurricane:

Sustained winds of 74-95 miles per hour. Very dangerous winds will produce some damage. People, pets and livestock could be injured or killed by remaining outdoors from flying or falling debris.

Older (pre-1994 construction) mobile homes could be destroyed, especially if they are not anchored down properly. Newer mobile homes that are anchored properly can sustain damage to shingles or metal roof coverings, loss of vinyl siding, as well as damage to carports, sunrooms, or porches. Poorly build frame homes can experience major damage. Unprotected windows may break if struck by flying debris. Masonry chimneys can be toppled. Well-built frame homes can also experience damage to roof shingles, vinyl siding, soffit panels, and gutters. Overhead doors may fail if not secured properly. Failure of aluminum, screened-in enclosures can occur. Broken glass will pose a threat, and there may be damage to commercial signage, fences and canopies.

Large branches of trees will snap, and trees may topple. Extensive damage to power lines and poles will likely result in power outages.



Category Two Hurricane:

Sustained winds of 96-110 miles per hour. Extremely dangerous winds will cause extensive damage. Substantial risk of injury or death to people, pets, and livestock who remain outdoors due to flying and falling debris.

Older (pre-1994 construction) mobiles homes have a very high chance of being destroyed. Newer mobile homes can also be destroyed. Poorly build frame homes have a high chance of having their roof structures removed, especially if not anchored properly. Unprotected windows will have a high chance of being broken by flying debris. Well-build frame homes could sustain major roof and siding damage. Failure of aluminum, screened-in enclosures will be common. Unreinforced masonry walls can collapse. High percentage of roof and siding damage to buildings. Windows in high-rise buildings can be broken. Broken glass will pose a significant danger, and commercial signage, fences and canopies will be damaged or destroyed.

Many shallow rooted trees will be snapped or uprooted. Near-total power loss is expected; clean water could become scarce due to system failures.



Category Three Hurricane:

Sustained winds of 111-129 miles per hour. Devastating damage will occur. High risk of injury or death to people, pets and livestock who remain outdoors due to debris.

Nearly all older (pre-1994 construction) mobile homes will be destroyed. Most new mobile homes will sustain severe damage with potential for complete roof failure and wall collapse. Poorly build frame homes can be destroyed. Well-build frame homes can be destroyed. Unprotected windows will be broken by flying debris. Isolated structural damage to wood or steel framing can occur. Complete failure of older metal building is possible, and older unreinforced masonry buildings can collapse. High percentage of roof and siding damage to buildings. Numerous windows will be blown out of high-rise buildings, and most commercial signage, fences and canopies will be destroyed.

Many trees will be snapped or uprooted. Electricity and water will likely be unavailable.



Category Four Hurricane:

Sustained winds of 130-156 miles per hour. Catastrophic damage will occur. Very high risk of injury or death to people, pets, and livestock who remain outdoors due to debris.

Nearly all older (pre-1994 construction) and a high percentage of new mobile homes will be destroyed. Poorly built homes can sustain complete collapse of all walls as well as the loss of the roof structure. Well built homes can sustain severe damage with loss of most of the roof structure and/or some exterior walls. Extensive damage to roof coverings, windows, and doors will occur. Wind-borne debris will break most unprotected windows and penetrate some protected windows. High percentage of structural damage to the top floors of apartment buildings. High percentage of collapse in older unreinforced masonry buildings. Steel frame in older industrial buildings can collapse. Most windows will be blown out of high-rise buildings, and nearly all commercial signage, fences, and canopies will be destroyed.

Most trees will be snapped or uprooted and power poles downed. Fallen trees and power poles will isolate areas. Power outages and long-term water shortages may last for many months; most of the area will be uninhabitable during that period.



Category Five Hurricane:

Sustained winds greater than 157 miles per hour. Catastrophic damage will occur. Very high risk of injury or death to people, pets and livestock who remain outdoors due debris, but also if indoors in mobile homes or framed homes.

Almost complete destruction of all mobile homes will occur, regardless of age or construction. High percentage of framed homes will be destroyed. Extensive damage to roof covers, windows and door will occur. Wind-borne debris damage will occur to nearly all unprotected windows and many protected windows. Complete collapse of many older metal buildings can occur. Most unreinforced masonry walls will fail leading to the collapse of buildings. Significant damage to wood roofs will occur. High percentage of industrial and low-rise apartment buildings will be destroyed. Nearly all windows will be blown out of high-rise buildings, and nearly all commercial signage, fences, and canopies will be destroyed.

Nearly all trees will be snapped or uprooted and power poles downed. Fallen trees and power poles will isolate areas. Power outage and long-term water shortages may last for many months; most of the area will be uninhabitable during that period.



Hurricane Hazards

Living in the Coastal Bend means that each year from June 1st through November 30th we are at risk of being impacted by a hurricane. Unfortunately, previous hurricane seasons cannot be held as accurate indicators of our present risk each year. Whether it is forecasted to be “higher than average”, “average” or “below average” season, activity-wise, our risk is the same here in Jim Wells County.

IT ONLY EVER TAKES ONE HURRICANE TO AFFECT A COMMUNITY!

Wind

Hurricanes are categorized by sustained winds of 74 miles per hour to 157+ miles per hour. Wind caused damage are to some degree dependent upon the local building codes in effect, how well, and how long they have been enforced.



Tornadoes

Tornadoes may form in the rain bands of a hurricane and cause significant damage. Tornadoes are commonly found in the right front quadrant of the storm. These tornadoes are not as intense as those in the Midwest, but they can inflict tremendous damage with little to no warning because they are often hidden by the intense rainfall that is already falling.



Storm Surge

Storm surge is an abnormal rise of water generated by a storm that moves ashore prior to and during a hurricane that is making landfall. As the storm makes landfall, inundation levels (depth of water above ground level) of 2 to 30 feet may occur along the coastal areas.

Here in Jim Wells County, we are far enough inland where storm surge is not likely a hazard that we will have to deal with for a land-falling hurricane. However, it is very



important to know what storm surge is and the devastation that it can cause. Those areas along the coast have the highest vulnerability to storm surge. Of course, damage severity depends upon the hurricane's size, forward speed, its direction of movement and intensity. Storm surge has the potential to cause the greatest loss of life, cripple communications, cause sewers and storm water basins to back up and contaminate drinking water supplies. Storm surge can leave roads, streets and bridges filled with sand, debris and in some cases structurally unstable.

Heavy Rain

Over the past 30 years, freshwater flooding has caused more drowning deaths than storm surge flooding. Torrential rains associated with slow moving, or stationary, tropical storms and hurricanes on average can produce 16+ inches of rain with a 24 to 36 hour period. Heavy rains can create massive health problems and have a disastrous effect on a community's ability to recover quickly.



When a Hurricane or Tropical Storm Threatens Jim Wells County

As a hurricane or tropical storm moves closer to the Coastal Bend and presents a real threat to the citizens of Jim Wells County, your local Emergency Management office will activate the Emergency Operations Center. Emergency Management personnel will remain in frequent contact with the National Hurricane Center and the local National Weather Service office in Corpus Christi to closely monitor the development and progress of the hurricane or tropical storm.



Your local Emergency Management Office will utilize the area media outlets to provide frequent updates on the storm, recommend emergency protective actions, and issue evacuation orders if necessary.

Local Shelter Issues

There is a substantial shelter space deficit throughout the Coastal Bend and Jim Wells County is no exception. So, if you have a safe place to go, plan to use that location instead of a Public Shelter. Jim Wells County is considered a no-shelter county since we are away from a direct hit of a land-falling hurricane or tropical storm. Still, the office of Emergency Management will work tirelessly to identify a shelter, if necessary, for those individuals who have no safe place to go. Schools as well as public and private businesses unfortunately do not agree ahead of time to act as a shelter because of the liability of taking in families. If the threat is extremely high, county officials will work to set up shelters of last resort and will be announced at the earliest time possible for families to make arrangements.

Still, it is imperative that you and your family have a plan in place and identify a place of shelter in the event you must evacuate in a disaster.



Jim Wells County works very closely with the American Red Cross and their officials will work to bring aid to the area if necessary to prepare for the storm as well as

potentially set up shelters after the threat of a hurricane or tropical storm passes if families need to relocate. When you arrive, you and all your family members will be required to register as a resident of the shelter. This ensures accountability of who is inside the shelter and an accurate count for capacity. If you must leave the shelter for any reason, you will be required to then check out at the registration desk. Because these kinds of shelters are not hotels, we are not able to provide any conveniences or luxuries. Food and water will be available but, there may be a slight delay in initial service. If you want or need special food items, bring them with you, as this is highly encouraged. In fact, bring your family's disaster survival kit to ensure you have what you need. Below are some items you should consider bringing when going to a shelter:

- Drinking water (initially)
- Snacks or special foods
- Lawn chair, bed roll, or blankets and pillows
- Books or electronic entertainment items with headphones
- Moist towelettes for personal hygiene
- Change of clothing for several days
- All medications

Remember that weapons and alcoholic beverages will not be permitted. The only animals allowed will be service animals.

Residents with Special Needs

Some residents have medical issues that cannot be accommodated in a regular public shelter. For those people whose health would quickly and dramatically deteriorate in a public shelter and have no other safe place to go should contact the local hospital, but keep in mind that there is highly limited hospital sheltering for people who are extremely high risk and cannot survive out a hospital environment. In some cases, a physician may recommend hospital sheltering and give specific details of your medical situation. You may also be responsible for fees associated with hospital sheltering.



It is highly recommended that if you have special needs or are disabled, to register for State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry (STEAR). STEAR is for people who have disabilities, those who have limited mobility, communication barriers, require additional medical assistance during an emergency event, require transportation assistance and for those who require personal care assistance. The STEAR program allows local emergency managers a list of some of the needs that are present in the community. Registering for STEAR DOES NOT guarantee that you will

receive a specific service during an emergency. Available service will vary by community.

You can register for STEAR by going to <http://STEAR.dps.texas.gov>, or by dialing 2-1-1 on your phone or by obtaining a printed or electronic form of the STEAR registration at the Jim Wells County Office of Emergency Management.

Registration is VOLUNTARY and all of the information you provide will be kept COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL.

Utility Tips

Locate the water shut-off valve for your residence. The valve is generally on the side of the house nearest the water meter/backflow prevention device, or may be inside the garage. Test the water shut-off valve to be sure it is operational. If the shut-off valve is not operational, have it repaired or replaced.

Turn the water shut-off valve to the off position if you are evacuating your residence prior to the storm. This will help minimize damage to the interior of your home should a pipe burst.

Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for turning off your water heater and unplug it; or, switch off the circuit breaker. Turn off the power and shut-off the water valve to your irrigation system.

You may want to consider filling a clean bathtub or other large containers with water before the storm arrives. In the event water service is disrupted, that water can be used for drinking, cooking, or for flushing the toilet.



Locate your sewer cleanout. The cleanouts are typically made of PVC and/or plastic piping, and are generally located within three to five feet from a structure, and again between the property line and the street. Remove any shrubbery or obstructions in case utility service personnel need to access the cleanout. Verify that the cleanout is capped.

Not all wastewater lift stations have generators. During power outages, the wastewater lift station serving your neighborhood may be without power. When the power is restored to your home, do not assume that power has been restored to all lift stations. It is important to curtail the amount of water used to avoid overwhelming the wastewater collections system that may not yet be fully functioning.

Electricity

A strong storm or hurricane can cause significant damage, resulting in widespread power outages. Restoration efforts must be prioritized, starting with facilities that provide the most critical of services to residences:

- Damaged power plants and power lines from the plants, since these must be fixed before the service can be restored.
- Organizations that provide critical infrastructure functions to the community, such as hospitals, police and fire stations.
- Major power lines that serve large numbers of customers.
- Smaller power lines such as service to a single street.
- Individual homes or businesses still without power.



Keeping Safe During A Power Outage



When a power outage occurs, safety is a very important concern. Here are some basic tips that will keep you, your family and your employees safe when the power is out:

- Assume all cables and wires are energized and stay away.
 - Keep away from flooded and debris-laden areas because they may be hiding downed lines.
- Run your portable generator outside your house or building, and connect appliances or equipment directly to it.
 - If you leave your home, turn off appliances that may have been on when the power went out, or turn off your main breaker.
 - Avoid driving in damaged areas. You might interfere with rescue or restoration efforts, as well as jeopardize your own safety.

Generator Use

When the power goes off, many residents turn to emergency generators to power refrigerators, freezers, lights, fans and other appliances. If you use a generator, extreme caution is certainly required. While convenient and useful, generators can create hazards for homeowners and electric utility workers. Always read and follow the manufacturer's safety and operating instructions.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a color-less, odorless and tasteless poison gas. It is a component of the exhaust from the generator engine. The symptoms of exposure are subtle, but deadly. Never run your generator inside your home or garage or in any other enclosed space. Inexpensive CO detectors, similar to smoke alarms, are readily available and recommended as an added safety precaution.



To avoid Carbon Monoxide poisoning, never use a generator indoors or in attached garages. Only operate the generator outdoors in a well-ventilated, dry area away from air intakes to the home.

To avoid electrocution, plug individual appliances into the generator using heavy duty, outdoor rated cords with a wire gauge adequate for the appliance load. Do not operate more appliances and equipment than the output rating of the generator. This will overload and damage the generator and possibly create a fire hazard.

If a generator is connected to the house wiring, the home must have a transfer switch installed by a licensed electrician. A transfer switch connects your house to the generator and disconnects it from the utility power. This prevents back feeding, or energizing circuits outside your home. Back feeding most commonly occurs when a generator is connected directly to the electric panel or circuit in a home. Feeding power back into the utility system during an outage will energize the transformer serving the house and could pose a serious threat to crews working to restore power in the area who may not know they are working with an energized line.

Do not store fuel indoors or try to refuel a generator while it's running. Gasoline (and other flammable liquids) should be stored outside of living areas in properly labeled, non-glass, safety containers. They should not be stored in a garage if a fuel-burning appliance is in the garage. The vapor from the gasoline can travel invisibly along the ground and be ignited by pilot lights or electric arcs caused by turning on the lights. Avoid spilling fuel on hot components. Put out all flames or cigarettes when handling gasoline. Always have a fully charged, approved fire extinguisher located near the generator. Never attempt to refuel a portable generator while it is running.

After the Storm

After major storms, our lives can change drastically. These disasters affect everyone to some extent. Relief supplies and other aid will be arriving as quickly as possible, but it may take several days. Try to remain calm, patient and understanding. Your attitude affects you and everyone around you. Remember that the longest and hardest part of dealing with a hurricane is in the recovery.

There may be residual flooding and roads may be blocked for days or weeks, making damaged areas inaccessible. This may mean that you will not be allowed back to your home for days, or possibly weeks. Emergency workers want your return home to be as safe as possible and need



time to clear safe access and secure hazards. Listen to local media for re-entry information and do not go into unsafe areas. Drive only if absolutely necessary and avoid flooded roads and washed out bridges. Do not go sightseeing as you could inhibit emergency responders and officials from doing their jobs.

If you evacuated out of the area, consider staying away for a few extra days. Before you decide to return, consider the following:

- Power will be out for an undetermined period of time. This means no air conditioning, no lights, no refrigeration, no water pump and in many cases no stove.
- Telephone service will be out or limited. This include 911 calling. Lack of power and damaged facilities will affect both landline telephones and cellular telephone service. Even if your phone works, use it for emergencies.
- Municipal water supplies may be unsafe to drink without boiling or chemical treatment. Treat all water as unsafe until you are notified that it is safe.
- Sewer lift stations will not work, meaning toilets will not flush and sinks not drain, and they may backup into your home or property. When you do return, some damage may not be readily apparent, so here are some things to keep in mind for your safety.

Inspect your home for damage. Check for water and sewer line damage. Check the electrical system. Turn off the main breaker until you are sure the system is safe. Check for natural gas and/or bottled gas leaks. Do not enter or stay in a structure if you smell gas.

Be careful when you go outside and pay attention to where you walk and stand. Avoid any downed wires or standing water. Report downed wires to your utility company or to emergency services.

Check above you for low hanging objects or loose things that could fall.

Beware of wild animals that might be dangerous. Fire ants, bees, wasps, snakes, rodents and wild animals seeking higher ground. They can create health and safety hazards.



Be careful of domestic animals, even ones you know. They may be frightened or injured and more dangerous than you expect.

Do not connect generators to your house wiring! Service personnel can be killed, or fires started elsewhere. Use your generator only in a well-ventilated area and shut it down during refueling. This is important!

REMEMBER: Insurance companies will send special disaster assistance teams, as will the state and Federal governments. Still, it may be more than a week before those teams are able to get into operation.

Take pictures of the damage, both to the house and its contents for insurance claims.

Have all your insurance documents ready and be patient!

When help does arrive, some may be in the form of the unscrupulous fortune seekers. Do not sign repair contracts until you have checked out the contractor. Do not pay for any services until the work has been completed.

As for a valid county contractor's license: ▲ Is the contractor bonded? ▲ Does the price seem fair? ▲ Are high-pressure tactics being used? Report the suspicious contractor to authorities to be checked out! If you see unfairly high prices being charged, report it! Local authorities want to help residents by requiring competence and fairness.



Thunderstorms & Lightning

It doesn't have to be raining for lightning to strike. Almost all lightning will occur within 10 miles of the parent thunderstorm, but it CAN strike much farther than that. Lightning detection equipment has confirmed bolts striking almost 50 miles away, but these are very rare.

Thunderstorms can produce several types of hazardous weather including large hail, damaging winds, flash floods, and tornadoes.

Where to Go

The safest location during a thunderstorm is inside a large enclosed structure with plumbing and electrical wiring. These include shopping centers, schools, office buildings, and private residences. If lightning strikes the building, the plumbing and wiring will conduct the electricity more efficiently than a human body. If no buildings are available, then an enclosed metal vehicle such as an automobile, van or school bus makes a decent alternative.



Where NOT to Go

Not all types of buildings or vehicles are safe during thunderstorms. Buildings are NOT SAFE (even if they are “grounded”) if they have exposed openings. These include beach shacks, metal sheds, picnic shelters/pavilions, carports, and baseball dugouts. Porches are dangerous as well.

Convertible vehicles offer no safety from lightning, even if the top is “up”. Other vehicles which are NOT SAFE during lightning storms are those which have open cabs, such as golf carts, tractors, and construction equipment.

Remember, it is not the rubber tires of a vehicle that protect you from lightning. The metal shell of a vehicle gives the electricity from the lightning a path to flow around you.

What to Do

Once inside a sturdy building, stay away from electrical appliances and plumbing fixtures. You may want to unplug valuable electrical equipment so they will not be damaged. As an added safety measure, go to an interior room. If you are inside a vehicle, roll the windows up, and avoid contact with any conducting paths leading to the outside of the vehicle such as radios, CB's, and the ignition or you could be badly burned if lightning strikes.

What NOT to Do

Lightning can travel great distances through power lines, especially in rural areas.

Do not use electrical appliances, including corded telephones and desktop computers, unless it as an emergency. Cordless phones, cell phones, laptop and tablet computers are safe to use.

Stay away from the windows and do not take a shower or use the bathtub.

What should I do if I am in a boat on the open water during a thunderstorm?

Thunderstorms over coastal waters or even area lakes are generally unpredictable. Even with the best weather reports, boaters can still be caught in open waters when a thunderstorm develops. With or without a lightning protection system, it is critical to take additional precautions to protect yourself.

Stay in the center of the boat cabin, if so designed. If there is no cabin, stay low in the boat. Don't be a stand-up lightning rod!



Keep arms and legs inside the boat. Don't dangle them over the side.

Stop fishing, water skiing, swimming or other water activities when there is lightning or when weather conditions look threatening. Lightning can strike well ahead of the storm.

Heat Emergencies

Heat emergencies are of three types: heat cramps (caused by loss of salt in the body), heat exhaustion (caused by dehydration) and heat stroke (shock).

Remove the victim from the heat and have him/her lie down. Apply cool compresses, elevate the feet, drink fluids and use a fan to blow cool air. Get medical help immediately if needed.

Heat emergencies are easily preventable by taking precautions in the hot weather. If the problem isn't addressed, heat cramps (again caused by loss of salt from heavy sweating) can lead to heat exhaustion (caused by dehydration), can progress to heatstroke.

Heatstroke, the most serious of the three, can cause shock, brain damage, organ failure, and even death.

The early symptoms of a heat emergency include: Profuse sweating, fatigue, thirst, and muscle cramps.

Later symptoms of heat exhaustion include: headache, dizziness and lightheadedness, weakness, nausea and vomiting, cool moist skin and dark urine.

The symptoms of heatstroke include: fever, irrational behavior, confusion, dry, hot and red skin, rapid shallow breathing and pulse, seizures, and unconsciousness.



Call 911 if:

- The person loses consciousness at any time.
- There is any other change in a person's alertness (for example, confusion or seizures).
- Fever (temp above 104 degrees Fahrenheit).
- The person shows signs of shock (bluish lips and finger-nails and decreased alertness).
- Other symptoms of heat stroke are present (like rapid pulse or rapid breathing).
- The person's conditions does not improve, or worsens despite treatment.



BEAT THE HEAT: Extreme Heat

Heat related deaths are preventable

WHAT:

Extreme heat or heat waves occur when the temperature reaches extremely high levels or when the combination of heat and humidity causes the air to become oppressive.

WHO:



Children



Older adults

More males than females are affected



Outside workers



People with disabilities

WHERE:



Houses with little to no AC



Construction work sites



Cars

HOW to AVOID:



Stay hydrated with water, avoid sugary beverages



Stay cool in an air conditioned area



Wear light-weight, light colored, loose fitting clothes

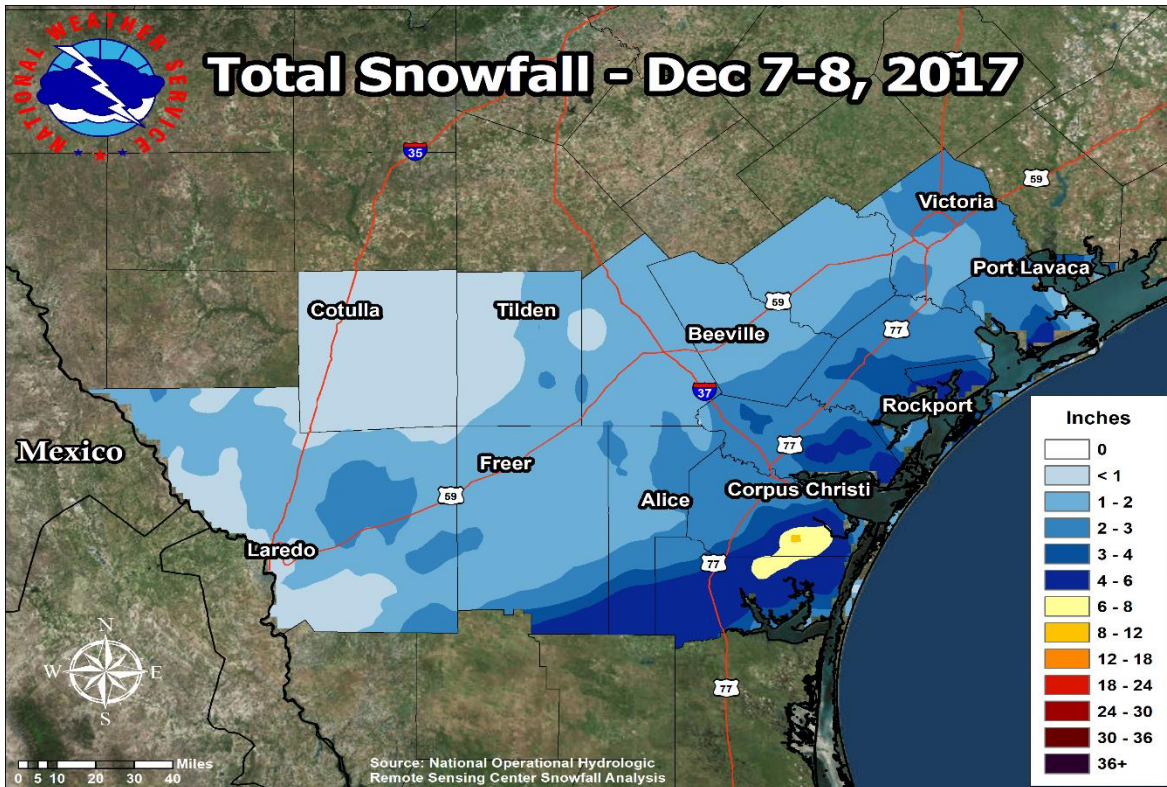
Prevention:

- Wear loose-fitting clothing in hot weather
- Rest frequently and seek shade when possible.
- Avoid exercise or strenuous physical activity outside during hot or humid weather.
- Drink plenty of fluids every day. Drink more fluids before, during, and after physical activity.
- Be especially careful to avoid overheating if you are taking drugs that impair heat regulation, or if you are overweight or elderly.

Also be mindful of outdoor pets and livestock, make sure they have fresh cool water and shade/protection from the sun to stay cool.

Cold Weather Recommendations

Although the Coastal Bend and Jim Wells County basks in a subtropical climate most of the year, occasional arctic cold fronts can invade the area causing frosts and/or freezes. We've even had our years where snowfall has occurred (think the "Christmas Miracle" on December 24, 2004 and then again early December in 2017)! Damage to crops is the most common result. Contact County Extension Services for further information.



- Dress in layered clothing and wear some kind of head cover.
- Keep pets inside. Make sure they are out of the wind and within some type of cover. When necessary walk them on the grass (not the cold sidewalk).
- Protect livestock and other animals with adequate shelter. Provide plenty of water and ensure that it does not freeze, and provide extra feed and supplemental heat.
- Bring potted plants inside.
- Cover outdoor plants with burlap or cloth. Cold will penetrate plastic.
- Check space heaters for sufficient ventilation.
- Do not refuel kerosene heaters inside.
- Make sure fireplace flues are working properly.
- Check extension cords for breaks and/or fraying.
- Do not use charcoal or gas grills indoors for heat! They produce deadly carbon monoxide fumes!

FIGHT GET THE SHOT FLU

Flu refers to illness caused by a number of different influenza viruses. Flu can cause a range of symptoms and effects, from mild to lethal. Flu symptoms may include fever, coughing, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headaches, body aches, chills and fatigue.

Most healthy people recover from the flu without problems, but certain people are at high risk for serious complications. Those that are more at risk are children, individuals 65 years of age or older, pregnant women, people with an underlying chronic disease, or those with immune-suppression.

Annual outbreaks of the flu usually occur during the late fall through early spring. In a typical year, approximately five to twenty percent of the population will get the flu.

Influenza vaccination is highly encouraged, especially early in the season as supplies may be limited if a flu pandemic occurs and the flu is spread more easily.



STOP FLU THE SPREAD OF

REMEMBER THE 3 C'S



1 CLEAN

Wash your hands often. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.



2 COVER

Cover your cough. Use a tissue to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Don't have a tissue? The crook of your elbow will do.



3 CONTAIN

Contain germs by steering clear of others who are sick. If you do get sick, stay at home until you're well again, so you don't spread more germs.

Tornadoes

What Is A Tornado?

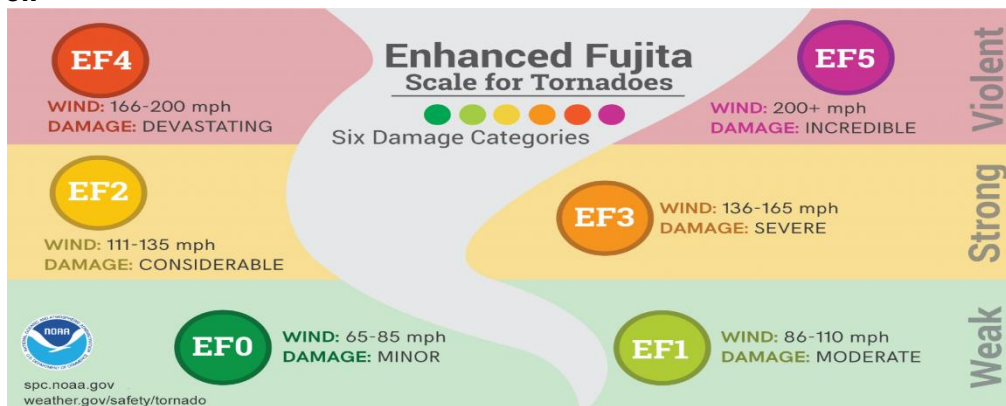
A Tornado is a violent storm with whirling winds of up to 300 miles per hour. It appears as a funnel shaped cloud, from gray to black in color, which extends to the ground from the base of a thunderstorm.



A tornado spins like a top and may sound like the roaring of an airplane or locomotive. Their direction of travel can be erratic and may change suddenly. These short-lived storms are the most violent of all atmospheric phenomena and the most destructive force, over a small area.

When Can A Tornado Occur?

Most tornadoes in South Texas are likely to occur during the peak heating of the day around 2PM to 7PM during the months of June, July and August; however, they can occur at any time, often with little to no warning. Fewer tornadoes tend to occur in the winter and early spring. Most tornadoes in Jim Wells County are considered weak with winds of 50 to 100MPH, but these weak tornadoes can still do catastrophic damage on a local level.



Tornado Watch or Tornado Warning?

We are fortunate here in South Texas to have a National Weather Service Office in Corpus Christi, located at the Corpus Christi International Airport.

When a Tornado WATCH is issued, it is normally issued by the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma. When they post a tornado watch they want the public to know that conditions are right for a tornado.

When a Tornado WARNING is issued, it is posted by our LOCAL National Weather Service Office right here in Corpus Christi. Dedicated local meteorologists are constantly monitoring our local weather forecast and they are the ones who send out the warnings (again locally) that the media then distributes to the public as quickly as possible. When a tornado warning is issued for a given area, a tornado has been SIGHTED or has been DETECTED on the Doppler Radar. The warning will include those cities in the path of the storm.

In general, a watch means, “Caution, Watch the Sky” and a warning means “DANGER, TAKE COVER!”

For Tornado Watches:

When conditions are right for a tornado, there are a few things you should do:

1. Stay tuned to a local weather station or listen to your NOAA Weather Radio.
2. Secure any loose objects outdoors, or move them inside.
3. Survey local structures for the most suitable shelter.
4. Keep watching the sky to the south and southwest and if you see any funnel shaped clouds, report them immediately to the nearest law enforcement agency and take cover. Keep in mind that in order for a tornado to be classified as a tornado, the “funnel” from the base of the cloud MUST make a touch down to the ground. Until the funnel reaches the ground, it is only a funnel cloud.

<u>Watch</u>	<u>Warning</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Conditions are favorable for severe weather	<input type="checkbox"/> Severe weather is occurring or imminent
<input type="checkbox"/> Typically lasts hours	<input type="checkbox"/> Typically 30 to 60 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/> Cover a large area	<input type="checkbox"/> Cover a small area
<input type="checkbox"/> Be aware and monitor for warnings	<input type="checkbox"/> TAKE ACTION!

For Tornado Warnings:

This means that a tornado has either been spotted near your area or is predicted to come your way. **TAKE COVER NOW!!!** Do NOT leave your shelter until you are sure no further danger exists. Remember, there is no guaranteed safe place during a tornado. Some examples of places you may be in:

1. **In a Motor Vehicle:** The least desirable place to be during a tornado is in a motor vehicle. Never try to outrun a tornado in your car. Stop your vehicle and get out. Seek shelter elsewhere. Do not get under or next to your vehicle. A ditch or ground depression will help, if a tornado shelter is not nearby.

2. **At School:** Follow the schools disaster plan. Stay away from auditoriums, gymnasiums, and other areas with wide, free-span roofs. Go into center hallways and stay away from windows.

3. **Open Country:** Move away from the tornado's projected path at right angles. Seek shelter in a ditch, ravine, or culvert. Even a low spot in the ground will give you some protection. Stay away from trees and remember to always protect your head.

4. **In a Home or Condo:** The best place to go is the innermost hallway on the lowest floor. An interior closet is relatively safe. An interior bathroom is even better. The walls are close together and the bathtub, sink, and toilet help support debris in case the house collapses. **AVOID WINDOWS**, since flying debris does most of the killing. The worst kind of flying debris will be broken glass flying through the air. If a tornado actually gets close enough for the pressure drop to be experienced, the strong winds have probably already caused the most significant damage. Opening windows, in fact, may actually increase damage.

5. **In a Mobile or Manufactured Home:** These homes are easily damaged by flying debris and are one of the least desirable places to be in during a tornado. If a tornado approaches, seek other shelter immediately if you can. Otherwise, a bathroom with no windows could be your best defense seeking shelter in the bathtub. Do not drive your car. Do not get under your mobile home. If no other shelter is available, lie down in a ditch or a ground depression if one is close by.



Wildfires

Though we typically get a fair amount of rain throughout the year, here in the Coastal Bend and most certainly in Jim Wells County, we are susceptible to the potential of wildfires when vegetation is high, rain is scarce, winds are strong and air become dry.



Local area fire departments and volunteer fire departments work at the forefront for protecting Jim Wells County from fire threats. In addition, if needed, the state agency, Texas A&M Forest Service, could be called in for reinforcements if the fire becomes out of control and local resources are no longer able to manage the wildfire.

Tips to Make Your Home Safer From a Wildfire:

- Keep tree branches trimmed away from roofs and gutters. Keep gutters free of leaves.
- Structures should have an area of at least 30 feet of defensible space around them that is clean, green, and free of dead vegetation as much as possible.
- Remove dead vegetation and dried leaves from around homes and structures.
- Plant less flammable, ornamental vegetation next to structures and use chunky mulch, shells or gravel as mulch.
- Maintain a working irrigation system around structures and use it according to local water restrictions.
- Cover eaves and other openings with wire mesh no larger than 1/8th of an inch.
- Keep combustible items, gases, and liquids away from structures.
- Overgrown vegetation around boats, ATV's, and sheds should be cut.
- Build homes with fire-resistant materials.
- Keep driveways at least 12 feet wide and free of overhanging branches and overgrown plants that may hinder emergency response.

Believe it or not, 70% of wildfires are caused by people. This includes throwing cigarette butts out the car window and into dry vegetation, leaving camp fires unattended, chains dragging from vehicles and causing sparks, etc. The other 30% are caused by natural processes such as lightning. Remember that the daily weather plays in an important part of wildfires, don't burn on windy days and/or when the humidity is below 30%. Of course, obey all burn bans that may be in place. Call and check with the local County Judge to see if a burn ban exists in Jim Wells County.

Hazardous Materials

CHEMICAL...

the word reminds us of the latest news story about an accident or environmental damage from improper storage, use or disposal of chemicals. However, many aspects of modern life are made possible or improved by responsible use and handling of chemicals.



AROUND THE HOUSE

When we think of hazardous chemicals, we tend to think of manufacturing plants, trains, cars or trucks. While this is valid, we should also consider our own kitchen cabinets, garage, pool and other places in our home where potentially harmful chemicals are a part of our everyday life. We become so familiar with them that we may have forgotten that they can injure or even kill us.

Here are a few common household chemicals and their hazards:

- Chlorine (pool): toxic fumes, corrosive and highly reactive
- Muriatic Acid (pool): corrosive, toxic by inhalation and highly reactive
- Ammonia: toxic fumes and very reactive with other common cleaners
- Lighter Fluid: Flammable
- Propane: (grill): highly flammable
- Gasoline: flammable with vapors that are heavier than air and can travel to an ignition source
- Motor Oil: combustible
- Weed Killer: toxic by ingestion or absorption through skin
- Bug Killer: toxic by inhalation or absorption
- Drain Cleaner: toxic or corrosive
- Nail Polish Remover: flammable
- Paint: flammable
- Fertilizer: toxic, possibly flammable or explosive

No matter how comfortable you are with a product, here are some important safety reminders:

- ALWAYS follow label directions
- Never mix chemicals together
- Use only for approved purposes and in approved concentrations

- Store and dispose of safely, in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions
- Keep away from children
- Never store in containers that look like food or drink
- Understand first aid directions
- Keep the number of your local poison control center handy

If you suspect someone has been exposed to a chemical, consult your physician or The Texas Poison Center Network at 1-800-222-1222. This number will provide you help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If injuries are serious or the victim has trouble breathing, CALL 911!



Transportation of Material

Everyday hazardous materials are transported safely by highways, rail, air and sea. Because of the design, construction and safety features of chemical transportation, containers, significant releases are rare. However, there are occasional accidents. In an accident you can be affected either at home or on the highway. If you are at home you will be notified through the media or local public safety agencies. Follow instructions swiftly and carefully. You may be ordered to evacuate to a "shelter in place" depending on the chemicals involved. If ordered to evacuate do so immediately and the shelter will be determined at that time. If you are ordered to stay in your home, close all windows and doors and turn off the air conditioner because there may be fumes in the air that could be brought in by the air conditions system.



It is possible that a transportation accident could involve a radioactive substance. These materials are packed in limited quantities in very strong, well-marked containers. If you see a marked package or suspect radioactive material may be present, move away from the area and advise emergency responders. Do not attempt to move it yourself.