



### Hurricane Preparedness on a Shoestring Budget

#### I. Introduction

This handout assumes a “starting from scratch” situation for building a hurricane plan and the individual/individuals involved have no prior experience in hurricane/disaster planning. As a tourism professional, it is imperative that you seek formal safety training by attending seminars and classes, or simply communicate with your local emergency management agency and educate yourself on disaster planning.

#### II. Evaluation and Asset Inventory

- a. Human life comes first. Ensure that staff and/or volunteers are educated on hurricane preparedness and have their own plans in place at home so that they may assist the site in preparing for an evacuation without worry about their personal priorities. Make a call list for your employees broken into departments or teams. Each department manager will be responsible for remaining in contact with their team to call back into work after evacuation event when safe to do so.
- b. Identify your primary team leader/safety officer. This individual will be last out of the property and first back in after a hurricane evacuation event. They will remain in contact with managers throughout the event to provide updates. They will also be the primary contact for your County Emergency Management Office.
- c. Determine your flood risk utilizing flood zone classification for your property (Contact your County Emergency Management Office for direction).
- d. Inventory all physical assets, documenting on film, and prioritize for removal from property or for on-site wind stabilization and water incursion protection. Identify items that are likely to become airborne in high wind and low areas that are likely to flood in a torrential rain event. Identify any structures not likely to survive the event.
- e. Determine what items will stay and what items will need to leave with you.
- f. Identify your P.R. person. This individual will have sole responsibility for communicating with your team leader and with the media on the status of your property. Make a list of all media contact information for this individual to take with them. It is important that your employees know that they are not to speak with the media regarding the status of your property. It should only be done by the P.R. person.
- g. Identify water and electrical cut-offs for your property and contact information for your provider of electric power and water.

#### III. Planning & Packing

- a. First organize all items leaving with you, i.e., computer back-ups, insurance policies, administrative documents, call and contact lists for emergency management, law enforcement, security companies, insurance carriers, employees and volunteers, power and electric company, media contacts.
- b. Break your resources into teams for retail, office, and grounds. Hurricane shutters are as simple as particle board or plywood and wood screws. Measure and cut enough boards for those windows you want to protect. Any item on your property that can become airborne should be secured, i.e., tents or other lightweight structures. Determine what you will need to accomplish this. Low areas can be sandbagged. Purchase bags and sand and prepare ahead of time to be stored on site until use. Rubber/plastic tubs and plastic sheeting may be used to store other items that would not recover from water exposure, double wrap in trash bags and identify the highest level of a secure building on your property that will be most likely to survive the storm for a storage spot.
- c. Create a hurricane recovery tub: This is one tub containing flashlights, hard hats, heavy gloves, rubber gloves, rubber boots, first aid kit, particle masks, eye protection, disposable painter's suit, notebook and pen, disposable camera, three or four gallons of fresh water, bleach, hand sanitizer, caution tape, small tool kit with hammer, nails, screwdriver, crowbar, insect repellent, and other items as determined. Place this tub with the rest of your tubs in the most secure structure. This will be accessed by the first individuals on property for safety inspection of the site after the event, and prior to calling in employees for clean-up.

#### **IV. Educate your team**

- a. Create a plan based on your site evaluation, lists of resources both to leave and stay, packing and boarding supplies, communication needs. Create your contact and call lists copies for inclusion in your plan.
- b. Hold planning meetings with your staff, as well as drills, so that everyone knows what team they will be assigned to and what packing/securing tasks will need to be accomplished by each team prior to the storm arrival, and what to be wary of when returning to site, i.e., downed power lines, hazardous wildlife, etc.
- c. Identify a rally point location on your property where everyone reports when an evacuation is ordered and when they return for clean-up. No one should return to the property until the safety officer, in cooperation with emergency management and law enforcement has determined it is safe to do so.

#### **V. Conclusion**

Once again, the items listed above are your starting point for developing a plan for dealing with a hurricane evacuation on your property. It is for preparing for a hurricane. It does not address the evacuation itself, or post evacuation procedures. Protection of human life is always our priority. When making the decision to close your business due to an approaching storm, always err on the side of being too safe rather than waiting too long and putting yourself and/or your staff in jeopardy. Make sure your team knows where their evacuation location is and leave enough time for them to get there.

Be so familiar with your plan that you and your staff know what to do without having to read the plan. May is a great month for review and drills, inventory and filming, replenishing hurricane supplies, etc., as hurricane season begins in June.

Finally, don't put off some safety training for yourself and your staff that can be documented and placed in your personnel files.