

# LifeAdviser Special Edition

A Balanced Living Special Edition Newsletter

## Professional Help Is Available

Professional counselors are familiar with the effects trauma can have on individuals and families – unexpected trauma is unfortunately something we all may experience. Should you, a family member or someone you know seem to have difficulty successfully dealing with the a traumatic event or situation, do not hesitate to seek professional assistance. The following resources may provide additional information on coping with traumatic events:

### Resources

[Google Crisis Map](#)– Use this interactive map to find information regarding weather, shelters, traffic, and more.

[American Red Cross - Safe & Well Website](#) Use this link to reconnect with friends, family, and loved ones.

[American Red Cross - Open Shelters List](#) - Use this link to locate open shelters that have been set up in and around your local community.

[Federal Disaster Relief Aid](#) - If your county has been declared a disaster site, you may be eligible for disaster relief aid. Use this link to apply.

## Preparing for Hurricane Irma



While emergency management teams continue to assist those affected by the recent weather and flooding associated with Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Irma is also rapidly closing in with the potential for even more damage. Use the resources in this newsletter to expand your preparedness plans and know what to do to recover from a severe weather emergency. If you are an employee or eligible dependent of an organization contracting with CONCERN: EAP and need additional assistance, you can request counseling and work/life services by phoning (800) 344-4222, answered live 24/7. Other options for support are identified at the end of this newsletter.

### Deciding to Stay or Go

Before the storm, the decision to evacuate will be up to you- but emergency officials will let you know what's in your best interest. Make sure to listen to the guidance of emergency officials so you can make the right decision for you and your family. Until you have to make that decision, it is best to have a plan in place for both staying at home and evacuating to another location. Learn more here about how to make the best choice and how to execute the necessary precautions whether you stay or go.

### What do I do if there is an evacuation order issued for my area?

Evacuations are necessary to protect people from the potential life-threatening effects of hazards. Hurricane evacuations are typically focused on individuals living in "low-lying" areas. Typically, these are areas located immediately adjacent to or within close proximity to the coast or a major coastal waterway. Evacuations are

focused in these areas because the greatest risk to life from a hurricane comes from water – both storm surge and breaking waves along the immediate coast and flooding caused by heavy rains away from the coast. Anyone living in a manufactured home will be asked to evacuate, as these structures are not designed to withstand the very strong winds that accompany a hurricane. If you do not live in a manufactured home and live away from the coast and/or a major coastal waterway, you may be urged to "Hide from the Wind" or, essentially, stay put. If this is the case, and you feel that your residence is "wind-worthy," the best place to be is in a walk-in closet, bathroom, or inner hallway away from windows and doors.

If you must evacuate, seek shelter in a sturdy building located inland from the coast, such as masonry or wood-frame building or hotel, or an officially designated American Red Cross shelter. If you plan to evacuate, particularly if you are not ordered to do so, leave early so that you don't impede carefully planned evacuation procedures that plan for a certain number of cars occupying crowded roadways before a storm. Evacuations are planned well in advance and include "clearance time," which is the time it takes for all evacuees to reach a safe destination and to clear the roadways in advance of a storm. The bottom line is to make sure you have a plan – know what you're going to do and where you're going to go if an evacuation order is issued.

In the event that an evacuation order is issued for your area, consider the following:

- Stay alert to storm advisories; know the difference between a hurricane watch and warning.
- Enact your family disaster plan.
- Map out your evacuation route – use travel routes specified by local authorities. DO NOT get on the road without a place to go.
- Fill your car with gasoline.
- Evacuate if told to do so – DO NOT get stranded. EVACUATE EARLY. If possible, evacuate to the home of either friends or

family in a non-vulnerable area within your county. Next, try a motel or hotel and, as a last resort, go to a public shelter. Remember, shelters are not designed for comfort and do not usually accept pets.

- Enact your pet plan. Before a storm threatens, contact your veterinarian or local humane society for information on preparing your pets for an emergency.
- Bring your disaster supply kit, including important documents.
- Secure your home before leaving. Board up windows and glass doors, anchor loose yard objects or bring them inside and lock your doors.
- Get cash. Following a hurricane, banks and ATMs may be temporarily closed.
- Notify family and friends of your plans.
- People who require special assistance in evacuating should register with their local emergency management office. turn off the gas for any reason, it must be turned back on by a professional.

#### **Where can I get more information about hurricane shelters in my area?**

There are many places to access information about shelters in your area. The best place to start is your state or local emergency management office or you can contact your local office of the American Red Cross (<http://www.redcross.org>).

#### **Where can I find information about what roads to take during an evacuation?**

In most cases, your state's Department of Transportation (<http://www.dot.gov>) determines which roads will serve as evacuation routes during emergencies. This information is typically available from the Department's Web site in the form of maps. Visit your state's Department of Transportation or Emergency Management (<http://www.fema.gov>) office to learn more.

#### **If You Are NOT Ordered to Evacuate**

The great majority of injuries during a hurricane are cuts

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caused by flying glass or other debris. Other injuries include puncture wounds resulting from exposed nails, metal, or glass, and bone fractures. To help you and your loved ones can get through the storm safely, please follow the guidelines below.

- Monitor the radio or television for weather conditions, if possible.
- Stay indoors until the authorities declare the storm is over.
- Do not go outside, even if the weather appears to have calmed--the calm "eye" of the storm can pass quickly, leaving you outside when strong winds resume.
- Stay away from all windows and exterior doors, seeking shelter in a bathroom or basement. Bathtubs can provide some shelter if you cover yourself with plywood or other materials.
- Prepare to evacuate to a shelter or to a neighbor's home if your home is damaged, or if you are instructed to do so by emergency personnel.

### If You ARE Ordered to Evacuate

Because of the destructive power of a hurricane, you should never ignore an evacuation order. Authorities will be most likely to direct you to leave if you are in a low-lying area, or within the greatest potential path of the storm. Be aware that most shelters and some hotels do not accept pets. If a hurricane warning is issued for your area or you are directed by authorities to evacuate the area:

- Take only essential items with you.
- If you have time, turn off the gas, electricity, and water.
- Disconnect appliances to reduce the likelihood of electrical shock when power is restored.
- Make sure your automobile's emergency kit is ready.
- Follow the designated evacuation routes---others may be blocked---and expect heavy traffic.

### Planning for Evacuation

You should plan to evacuate before a hurricane strike if you...

- Live in a mobile home. Do not stay in a mobile home under any circumstances. They are unsafe in high wind and/or hurricane conditions, no matter how well fastened to the ground.
- Live on the coastline or on an offshore island, or live near a river or in a flood plain.
- Live in a high-rise. Hurricane winds are stronger at higher elevations. Glass doors and windows may be blown out of their casings and weaken the structure.
- When evacuating....
- Stay with friends or relatives or at a low-rise inland hotel or motel outside flood zones. Leave early to avoid heavy traffic, roads blocked by early flood waters, and bridges impassible due to high winds.
- Most public shelters do not allow pets nor do most motels/hotels, so make arrangements for your pets ahead of time.
- Hurricane shelters will be available for people who have no other place to go. Shelters may be crowded and uncomfortable, with no privacy and no electricity. Do not leave your home for a shelter until government officials announce on radio and/or television that a particular shelter is open.

For more information and to create your own hurricane plan, please visit Ready.gov – <https://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan>

### After a Traumatic Event: What You Can Do

#### What You May Experience:

The following list describes a variety of normal reactions to a traumatic event. You or others may experience some of these in the weeks following the event. These reactions are generally temporary and not of great concern.

- Recurring thoughts or images of the event
- Heightened response to loud noises, shouting or crying – easily startled
- Discomfort being alone
- Difficulty concentrating and/or deciding what to do next

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- Strong desire to contact people who are important to you
- Feeling sad, scared, angry, irritable, or confused
- Difficulty sleeping
- Increase or decrease in appetite
- Physical problems—headaches, stomach aches, sore muscles, etc.
- Discomfort being in places that seem unsafe to you
- Feeling vulnerable, a loss of control
- Feeling exhausted
- Difficulty making decisions and thinking creatively
- Feeling guilty that others have suffered more than you have
- Recall of past traumas or losses
- Fear of leaving loved ones or your home
- Feeling excited and alive, or empty and depressed, or both intermittently
- Re-evaluation of your life – what's important; what's not

If you have been busy performing necessary tasks after the event, you may have a delay in your reactions until after you stop being busy. Recognize we may all be on different timetables, so don't expect others to handle things or be feeling the same way you do or vice versa. Be tolerant of your own, and others' reactions. If you are feeling overwhelmed, consulting with or seeing a counselor may be helpful.

### **What to Do for Your Children**

Parents try their best to protect their children from tragic events. However, sometimes frightening and overwhelming events invade a child's world. Suddenly a child's vision of his/her world as safe and predictable is abruptly shattered. As a parent, you must first recognize that dealing with tragedy is a process. Ask your child what they think, know, feel or fear before offering guidance.

The following information is meant to be a guide in talking

with your children, but if intense fears persist, please seek professional assistance.

Recognize that you have experienced the same event, so take care of your emotional needs first. This is critical in conveying to your child that everything will be okay. In order for them to feel safe, they need to sense that you can cope with this event as well.

Children can benefit by expressing their feelings to a parent who is genuinely listening. Listen carefully as your child recounts their version of the story including their fears and feelings. This brings them a sense that you understand their thoughts so that they can feel safe to talk more.

It is very important to let children know their feelings of fear or anger are a natural reaction to a traumatic event. Rebuild self-confidence by finding ways to praise your child for their actions, for talking with you, for sharing their feelings, for wanting to help and/or for expressing concern for others.

It is important to remember that you do not have to "fix" how your child feels. Instead, focus on helping your child understand and deal with his or her experiences. Healing is an evolving state for most children, but some may need professional help.

If signs of stress do not subside after a few weeks, or if they get worse, consider consulting a mental health professional who has special training in working with children. In time, and with help, your children will return to health.

If talking is not working, find alternate ways to help your child express his/her feelings. Drawing pictures, writing or role-playing a positive happy ending can be reassuring to a child.

Include your child in future safety precautions to assist him/her in feeling safe and secure. This could include making sure the house is locked or where to meet in case there is a frightening event and you are separated. Taking action can assist in regaining a sense of security.

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If your child chooses to watch the tragic news on TV, set limits. Sit with your child and convey the stories of heroism and unity. Again, reassure your child that preventative measures are currently in force.

Re-establishing regular routines as soon as possible is helpful. Children are comforted in knowing their daily schedule is predictable.

Plan a future event (vacation, time together, family outing) and express your excitement about following through with this plan.

Recovering from tragedy is a process and through time, and with support, children will eventually heal. Talk to your children daily and affirm to them that you are there to listen and provide on-going support.

### When to Seek Help

If self-help strategies are not helping or you find that you are using drugs or alcohol in order to cope, you may wish to seek outside or professional assistance with your stress symptoms. For more information or to make an appointment, please contact CONCERN: EAP at 800-344-4222.

Source: National Mental Health Center, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

**American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry**  
(AACAP) [www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

**National Mental Health Association**  
[www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)

**Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**  
[www.fema.gov/](http://www.fema.gov/)

**National Institute of Mental Health**  
Office of Communications  
[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

### Additional Resources

**CONCERN LifeAdviser** hurricane-related information and links (log in with CONCERN company code required):

[https://concern-eap.personaladvantage.com/clients/10000026/section\\_005.jsp?module=section\\_005](https://concern-eap.personaladvantage.com/clients/10000026/section_005.jsp?module=section_005)

Visit [Hurricanes.gov](http://Hurricanes.gov) for the latest on the storm.

Visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) or [www.listo.gov](http://www.listo.gov) (Spanish) for tips on how to prepare for and stay safe during hurricanes and flooding.

Download the **FEMA Mobile App** to receive alerts from the National Weather Service, get safety and survival tips, customize your emergency checklist, find your local shelter, and upload your disaster photos to help first responders.

State-Specific resources:

#### FLORIDA

<http://www.floridadisaster.org>

#### SOUTH CAROLINA

<https://www.scdr.sc.gov/>

<http://www.scemd.org/>

#### NORTH CAROLINA

<https://readync.org>

<https://www.ncdps.gov/>

#### GEORGIA

<http://www.gema.ga.gov/>

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