Hurricane Harvey Special Edition

On Wednesday, August 23, 2017 Tropical Depression Harvey quickly gained strength, reaching Tropical Storm status in the Gulf of Mexico. Making landfall as a Category 4 storm on August 25, Hurricane Harvey was the first major hurricane to hit our state since 2008. It delivered the most rainfall ever from a single storm in the continental United States, topping 50 inches in some locations. It brought devastating flooding and destruction to parts of eastern Texas and southern Louisiana.

This special edition of Business Horizons salutes the women and men of Business Affairs who helped prepare for and respond to the storm...and who keep UTSA in a state of readiness every day.

Emergency Management Raises Awareness, Tracks Progress

The UTSA Office of Emergency Management closely monitored the development of Harvey, and immediately began to collaborate with university partners to ensure an effective response. By Thursday morning, Harvey strengthened to a Category 1 hurricane and was forecast to reach Category 2 status by the end of the day. The UTSA Emergency Response Team (ERT) quickly mobilized university resources, and started to communicate with the campus community to create situational awareness and convey emergency preparedness operations.

By Friday, the university was ready for Harvey, and the ERT had in place all resources to adequately provide support to campus residents as the storm neared the Texas coast. Saturday morning, Harvey made landfall as a historic Category 4 hurricane, and the San Antonio region braced for the impacts of the storm. While San Antonio was spared the brunt of the storm, the UTSA ERT remained in a state of readiness to address campus issues if warranted. Peak winds at the Main Campus were clocked at around 40-45 mph, with higher gusts evident on occasion. As the clouds cleared on Sunday afternoon and into Monday, UTSA departments assessed the campus and made all facilities ready for the school week.

The UTSA Office of Emergency Management is grateful to all university partners, and thanks the men and women of the UTSA ERT and campus departments for their dedication to the safety and security of our campus community during Hurricane Harvey preparedness, response, and recovery. Now, in true Roadrunner spirit, the UTSA community is coming together to continue supporting our friends and family across the Texas coast by organizing blood drives, collecting food and clothing donations, and reaching out to our sister UT institutions to provide support. In fact, UTSA PD assisted MD Anderson Cancer Center by sending four officers to relieve their staff so they could attend to their families and get some rest.

Together, we are not only #TexasStrong, we're #RoadrunnerStrong! THANK YOU Roadrunners for your compassion and empathy toward those in need throughout this historic disaster along the Texas coast.
Public Safety Leads the Charge

Public Safety Works to Ensure Campus Safety

The UTSA Department of Public Safety, comprised of the UTSA Police Department, Environmental Health Safety and Risk Management, Security Services, and Office of Emergency Management, began preparing for Hurricane Harvey on Tuesday, August 22, 2017. Office of Emergency Management Director Lorenzo Sanchez and Emergency Management Specialist Jacqueline Silva continued to monitor the pending storm. Numerous conference calls were conducted with executive administrators and other entities on campus. A joint decision was made to close the UTSA campus at 5 p.m. on Friday, August 25.

UTSA PD brought in additional officers and other support personnel to assist in preparation efforts. The UTSA Public Safety Emergency Operations Center was activated. Public Safety partnered with Facilities, Campus Services and other departments to see the university community through.

On Sunday morning another conference call was convened, and the decision was made to reopen the University Center, Student Recreation, and the Convocation Center for student activities.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, the UTSA Police Department deployed four officers to assist MD Anderson in Houston with its law enforcement responsibilities. UTSA officers joined officers from the UT Health to make the trek from San Antonio to Houston. Four officers we deployed, and more than 20 officers volunteered to assist. They have returned safety to UTSA.

We can’t sufficiently thank the officers who were deployed and those who volunteered for their selfless assistance to others in need. See photo, p6.

Kudos go to each and every member of the UTSA Department of Public Safety for their commitment and dedication in preparing for Hurricane Harvey, actions during the storm, and for assisting in the aftermath and recovery after this historic event.

UTSA offers assistance, support in storm’s aftermath

You Can Help!

Donate to the Roadrunner Pantry. Monetary donations can be made online and are tax deductible as allowable by law. Food donations are accepted in marked bins at the UC Donation Station in University Center North across from the Campus Bookstore during UC building hours. Donation bins are also located outside the Downtown Campus bookstore.

Support donation efforts organized by our student organizations. Student organizations are coordinating ways to help people affected by Harvey. Learn more.
Campus Services Takes On Harvey

Keeping the Community Fed

The newly renovated Roadrunner Café remained open throughout the weekend to provide meals to on-campus residents and emergency response team members. Disposable to-go containers were available for students to take to their residence halls if preferred, and hours were extended at the Roadrunner Café P.O.D. Campus Services commends UTSA Dining for taking significant steps to maintain operations at the Roadrunner Café during this time. Efforts included stocking grab-and-go options at the Café to alleviate wait times and facilitate faster service for emergency response team members, as well as securing hotel rooms for key staff at the Wyndham Garden hotel to ensure adequate staffing and avoid placing staff on the roads during potentially dangerous weather. UTSA Dining’s efforts resulted in excellent service throughout the weekend, enhancing the campus experience for UTSA’s residents and members of the emergency response team.

We’re Powerful

Thanks to partnership with EHSRM and Facilities, the Roadrunner Café was equipped with a generator to provide power in the case of a total power loss. We PARTNER to deliver excellent service

Blown Away by Efficiency

Campus Services collected all department signage around campus, such as yard signs, A-frames, and other non-permanent signs, to avoid damage during inclement weather. Signs were replaced on campus the following Monday to ensure messaging and directional information remained consistent to best direct customers.

The 'Runner at The Ready

The 'Runner drivers and buses remained available on stand-by in the case of emergency need.

Preparedness: It’s In The Bag

Campus Services partnered with Facilities to place sandbags in flood-prone locations across campus to minimize the risk of water damage.

Offering Shelter from the Storm

To accommodate residents, Campus Services opened garage gates at 5 p.m. Friday, the day of the storm’s landfall, to provide vehicle shelter during inclement weather. Gates were lowered at 6 a.m. the following Monday when classes resumed.

Key Campus Services staff members participated in daily briefings as part of the Emergency Response Team with university leadership.
Facilities’ Preparation

Facilities’ Takes Aim At Hurricane Harvey

Facilities took quick action to prepare for heavy rains and high winds to protect the campus and UTSA community. Crews sandbagged flood-risk areas, secured outdoor furniture, and cleaned storm drains. With the potential for water leaks in certain buildings, Facilities provided plastic coverings to protect university equipment and property. Hundreds of plastic sheets were picked up from Facilities representatives at the Sombrilla on Friday, August 25.

Here is a list of many of the actions that Facilities undertook to prepare for Hurricane Harvey. Each Facilities department and GCA Service Group housekeeping staff significantly contributed to preparing UTSA for the impact of the storm and initiating recovery actions when the campus re-opened:

- Processed short-notice customer requests for Facilities support and created work orders for each call.
- Filled and distributed more than 1,500 sandbags; pre-located or provided bags to customers.
- Cleared all ditches, storm drains, and floor drains of any debris to allow free-flow of water.
- Inspected building roofs and drains.
- Communicated with Win-Sam, thermal plant operator, on emergency response plan.
- Beefed up storm water protection devices at new surface parking lots (Devine and Tobin/Resident Lot 4) and at SEB construction site.
- Removed loose materials from all construction sites. Cut wind slits in SEB construction fencing.
- Took down large banners for Campus Services and other UTSA departments and secured signs and other loose items throughout campus.
- Secured and tied down all furniture in the Sombrilla and other core campus areas.
- Inspected sump pumps located throughout campus to ensure all were operational.
- Prepped and fueled Facilities vehicles and heavy equipment so they were ready for response.
- Established 12-hour shifts to provide 24-hour coverage.
- Care was taken to ensure personnel placed on the shifts would be able to respond.
- All personnel placed on the shifts reported to work as planned.
- Provided plastic covering to university employees to protect office equipment and property.
- Established Facilities Operations as the primary communications point for incoming and outgoing calls during campus closure.
- Established primary and secondary methods of communication for Operations staff.
- Provided status report of Facilities operations every two hours to Emergency Response Team and Center. Reports were highly praised by Office of Emergency Management director.
- Established primary, secondary and tertiary reporting locations for all staff.
- Completed walkthroughs of buildings during storm to monitor for water/storm damage.
- Turned off Sombrilla fountain to prevent loss of water during high winds.
- Since weather was still good Friday night, custodial crew was asked to report to duty and make ready all core facilities; action helped make campus ready for opening on Monday.

After the Storm

- Facilities completed all recovery operations by the morning of Thursday, August 31.
- Staff picked up sandbags, returned furniture, removed debris from trees and bushes, swept the streets and cleared storm drains.
Financial Affairs

Director of Financial Services & University Bursar Gary Lott served as Financial Affairs’ official Emergency Response Team (ERT) member. His role before the storm was that of coordination. Since funding options for emergency purchases were a major focus of the team’s agenda, he included Director of Purchasing John Clifford and Assistant Controller Diana Macias-Ollervidez in the first briefing on August 24, the Thursday before Friday’s landfall.

Gary was on standby and attended daily teleconferences with the rest of ERT and UTSA executive management. The daily briefings and updates continued through the weekend with the final briefing on Monday to officially close the ERT involvement.

Financial Affairs, Office of the Controller

The Office of the Controller had a key role to play in making sure emergency purchases could be made and issues addressed.

Diana Macias-Ollervidez, Assistant Controller, participated on the Emergency Response Team (ERT) calls. She and Lisa Bixenman, Credit Card Program Manager, made travel advance cards available to critical staff in areas like Housing, Police and Facilities in case the campuses were affected. They worked with the credit card bank to ensure that it adjusted credit limits for the potential additional activity. Diana and Lisa also issued travel advance cards to police officers who travelled post-Harvey to assist in Houston.

Disbursements and Travel Services (DTS) usually works the last weekend of August to ensure that all possible payments process before August. Due to the campus closing, they could not work onsite. They collected all available laptops and deployed them out to DTS the Friday before the hurricane so staff could work from home. In total, 12 DTS staff offered to work from home on the collection of work laptops and their own home computers, enabling DTS to process as much as possible before year end.

Unsure of where the hurricane would hit, the Office of the Controller considered and planned for the possibility that campus would still be closed into the week of August 28. Payroll prepared to confirm the September 1 monthly payroll from home, if necessary, to ensure that the direct-deposit file could be sent to UTSA’s bank on time.

Financial Affairs, Purchasing Office

During Financial Affairs’ preparation discussions leaders agreed that the best way to handle emergency purchases was through the ProCard. “Diana and Lisa supported the efforts of current cardholders and issued new cards to key staff members to help them move quickly in addressing emergency needs,” explained Director of Purchasing John Clifford.

Purchasing contacted several local vendors who would supply needed items and advised them that purchases would take place through the Procard, not a PO.

“While we encourage people to use Rowdy Exchange for their regular purchasing, in this emergency, speed outweighed security,” said Clifford. Emergency purchases are defined as those that can prevent hazard to life, health, safety, welfare, or property.

Purchasing staff covered items inside the warehouse with plastic sheeting in case of roof leakage. They also used plastic to protect buyers’ offices.
Human Resources Helps Address Questions

Human Resources ensured staff was prepared to assist employees, their dependents, and retirees with benefits issues, especially those located in areas directly impacted by Harvey.

The Leave Administration staff assisted before and after the storm answering questions regarding timekeeping for those required to work during the university closure.

Human resources updated the HR website to include frequently asked questions (FAQs) for employees regarding the official university closure.

UTSA PD Lends a Hand

The four officers who deployed to MD Anderson to provide law enforcement support following Hurricane Harvey.

From left to right:

Business Information Services

Business Information Services (formerly PeopleSoft Support and Sustainment Center) was focused on ensuring that systems were available for use by the university community. Since UT SIS is in Irving/Dallas, they were not as impacted by the hurricane as the eastern coast, so the UT System’s access was safe.

UTSA Emergency Management Resources

To Help You Plan Ahead

- UTSA App – emergency info module
- UTSA Emergency Response Guide – Available on UTSA App and Campus Alerts website
- UTSA Campus Alerts Website – www.alerts.utsa.edu (safety tips and information)
- Weather Apps – download and activate notifications
- Road Conditions – Drive Texas Website – www.drivetexas.org
- Emergency Management Facebook – www.facebook.com/UTSAOEM
- Emergency Management Twitter – www.twitter.com/UTSA_OEM
- Police Facebook - www.facebook.com/UTSAPoliceDepartment
- Police Twitter – www.twitter.com/UTSA_Police

Learn more in September’s edition of Business Horizons