

After the storm



**A resource guide to help you
get back on your feet after you
have braved the storm**



United Way of Greater Houston

Dear Friends,

United Way of Greater Houston has created *After the Storm* for you to use as a resource toward rebuilding your life. Whether you are trying to provide basic needs like food, shelter, and clothing, or you are struggling with the stress that is a major part of crisis recovery, you will find important and helpful information in this booklet. The entire content of this booklet is also available on our web site — www.unitedwayhouston.org — for your convenience.

The 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE is always available, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Let 2-1-1 be your first call when you don't know who to call. Trained information and referral specialists are always available to listen to your questions, understand your needs and help you identify resources that are tailored for your specific situation.

There are no words that can ease the losses you have experienced. Please know that there are many resources that can help you take those difficult steps toward recovery. United Way heals the past, shapes the future and makes today better for us all. Please know that United Way is here to help.

Very truly yours,

Anna M. Babin
President and CEO

Introduction

AFTER THE STORM

Hurricanes ... tornados ... earthquakes ... tropical storms ... floods ... when the forces of nature are unleashed, the results are often devastating. There is little anyone can do to prevent or reduce the power of these natural disasters.

This booklet is intended to serve as a guide along the path to recovery.

WHEN A CRISIS STRIKES

Living through a major crisis produces many different types of feelings. You may feel anxiety, depression, confusion and tension. These feelings may cause a breakdown in our usual coping mechanisms. You may find it hard to function, behave in unexpected ways or have trouble making decisions.

Although a crisis can result in a sense of anxiety, pain or hopelessness that makes it hard to cope, these same feelings can serve as motivation to look for help and develop new coping mechanisms.

That's where this guide comes in ... we hope you will use it to guide your steps as you begin the rebuilding process.

After the Storm – Next Steps

Use these checklists to guide your plan of action for recovery.

FOR YOUR FAMILY

- List your available financial resources
- Identify other sources of financial assistance
- Make a list of things you will need to replace
- Take photos of damage that has occurred
- Stay in touch with family and friends
- Consider joining a support group (or start one of your own)
- Return to normal routines as soon as possible
- Talk about your feelings

FOR YOUR CHILDREN

- Give lots of reassuring hugs
- Provide factual information about the disaster
- Encourage them to talk about their feelings– and be honest about your own
- Spend extra time with them at bedtime
- Return to regular schedules for work, play, school and rest
- Involve your children in the recovery with specific chores
- Praise responsible behavior

FOR YOURSELF

- Eat properly and drink plenty of liquid
- Exercise helps reduce stress– take a brisk walk
- Don't take on too much as you begin to rebuild
- Get plenty of rest – nap if you can't sleep
- Talk about your fears and concerns
- Consider talking with a counselor who can help you manage your stress
- Don't hesitate to ask for help when you need it

FOR YOUR HOME OR APARTMENT

- Contact FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency)
- Be sure your residence is safe before you return
- Contact your insurance agent– don't guess at your coverage
- Get more than one estimate for repairs
- Set up a safe place to keep receipts for all your expenses
- Determine what you can do by yourself
- Determine what you can do with the help of a few friends
- Determine what requires an expert (electrical, plumbing, etc.)
- Check references carefully
- Check contractor and repair firms with the Better Business Bureau

Things You Can Do for Yourself and Others

GET INTO A ROUTINE

During this difficult period, it is especially important that you take care of yourself. As quickly as possible, resume your usual activity patterns. Establishing a regular routine will help you and other family members begin the recovery process.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Try to eat properly. Choose foods that include the basic food groups and offer a balance of fruits, vegetables, protein, carbohydrates and other essential nutrients. Limit junk foods, especially for children, and drink plenty of fluids. Healthy eating will help you rebuild your strength during the trying times ahead.

Sleeping away from familiar surroundings can be very difficult. Make every effort to get as much sleep as possible so that you will be rested and able to face each day's challenges. Return to regular sleeping times as soon as you are able to do so. This will help your body refresh and restore itself.

TAKE CONTROL

Although it may seem that fate has taken charge of your life, it is essential that you reassert control as quickly as possible. Begin to plan for your recovery, even though you may feel that there is little you can do. Assess the damage you have experienced and identify those resources that are available to storm victims. Make a list of tasks each day so that you can celebrate small successes as you build up to larger accomplishments.

COMMUNICATE

Share your feelings with others. You can be sure that everyone affected by the disaster has a story to tell. Do not hesitate to tell about your experience and be a good listener for others who need to talk. Be open about your concerns, ask questions and express your emotions as they surface.

TUNE IN TO YOUR CHILDREN

You know how overwhelming the disaster has been for you as an adult. Be sensitive to the fact that your children may be particularly in need of your love and attention. Encourage them to talk about their fears. Acknowledge their losses and allow them to take an active role in the recovery process. The structure of a regular routine is especially important for children. Be sure they eat properly and get enough sleep just as soon as conditions permit. At times like these, lots of extra hugs and kisses can be very therapeutic for you and your children.

A Roof Over Your Head

The experience of homelessness for those who have been forced out of their homes as a result of a natural disaster is particularly devastating. Suddenly, in spite of years of careful planning and saving, you may have lost your home and its valued contents. You may have lost treasured mementos and cherished possessions that are an important part of your history. If this is the case, you have reason to grieve. While no one can truly recapture all that you have lost, there is help available to help you begin again.

FEMA (FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY)

If your area is declared a national disaster, you may qualify for financial aid. You are encouraged to apply for FEMA assistance or aid, regardless of the extent of the disaster you experienced.

People who suffered damages from the storms are eligible for assistance through various programs offered by FEMA. If you are a renter, you may be eligible for a grant from FEMA to cover one month of rent at a new location. A check for short-term rental assistance is based on the fair market rates in your area. Applicants who must remain in temporary housing for a period longer than one month may request more assistance until their apartment can be re-occupied or other permanent housing arrangements can be made.

The process involved in applying for FEMA may seem time-consuming. However, you may be missing an important source of financial assistance if you fail to take advantage of this opportunity.

When you call to apply, please have the following information available:

- Social Security number
- Address & zip code of damaged property
- Current mailing address
- Telephone numbers where you can be reached
- Household income information

You must first call the FEMA Application Line to have forms mailed to you. Call the FEMA Helpline if you need additional help or have questions. The FEMA Helpline is also a way to find out about the status of an application, additional services or the location of specific services.

FEMA Application Line1-800-621-FEMA (3362)
TTY1-800-462-7585

You can also apply online at www.FEMA.gov

Additional Resources

The American Red Cross and the Salvation Army are two organizations that offer a variety of resources, particularly during the early stages following a disaster. Be sure to contact both to determine whether their services meet your current needs.

American Red Cross1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2787)
Salvation Army713-752-0677

For information and referral to additional human service organizations, call the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE at

2-1-1 or 713-957-HELP or 1-800-541-7905.

The 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE is answered
24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Take Charge of Your Finances

You will want to determine whether your financial situation has been affected by the storm. Identify your available financial resources, then list your expenses. Prioritize your expenses so that the basic necessities are paid for first; then you can evaluate how to spend the funds that remain.

If you are concerned about your ability to pay your bills, the Consumer Credit Counseling Service (CCCS) can help you prepare a reasonable budget. CCCS can also help you negotiate a manageable repayment plan for your outstanding debts. There is no fee for services, but you must have some income in your household.

Make a list of all those with whom you do business and inform them of your circumstances if you are concerned about your ability to pay your bills. You may be able to postpone or reduce payments. Keep records of all such conversations and keep copies of everything for your files.

To avoid some consumer pitfalls following the disaster, you may contact the Better Business Bureau (BBB) to obtain a Flood Kit and information about how to protect yourself against consumer fraud.

FINANCIAL SERVICES AND CONSUMER ADVICE

Better Business Bureau 713-341-6141 or 713-868-9500
Consumer Credit Counseling Service..... 713-923-2227

LEGAL SERVICES

Lone Star Legal Aid 713-224-9911

When You Need Someone to Talk To

You have experienced a major life crisis. Whatever the nature of your loss – your home, your possessions, a friend or loved one – you will pass through many stages of grief. Shock, anger, fear and sadness are normal emotions associated with the grieving process. Don't feel that you have to deal with these feelings alone. There are numerous counseling services available at low or no cost to you. Family and individual counselors, therapists and other mental health professionals have the skills needed to guide you through this difficult time.

This is no time for heroics – reach out for help when you feel the need.

COUNSELING

Disaster Related Crisis Counseling (MHMRA)	713-970-7000
Crisis Counseling	1-800-273-8255
(Department of Health & Human Services)	

The primary goal of these programs is to alleviate the suffering experienced by survivors and victims of disasters. Services include, but are not limited to:

- Coordination of disaster mental health services
- Development of crisis counseling and brief therapy programs

Catholic Charities.....	713-526-4611
DePelchin Children's Center	713-730-2335
Family Services of Greater Houston.....	713-861-4849
Innovative Alternatives - Bay Area	832-864-6000
Jewish Family Service	713-667-9336
Mental Health America	713-523-8963
Montrose Counseling Center	713-529-0037

To talk with someone 24 hours a day, call Crisis Hotline 713-HOTLINE

Your Good Health

It is very important that you take care of yourself and other family members who have been through this crisis. Be sure to take your regular medications (insulin, blood pressure, antidepressant, etc.) and don't hesitate to seek medical help if you feel sick following the confusion and anxiety as a result of this disaster.

A variety of health care resources are available for you as you need them and you are encouraged to take advantage of them promptly. Your normal resistance to illness may have been lowered as a result of the stress you have been experiencing. You want to make every effort to build yourself up again. Take your vitamins, eat properly, get enough sleep and seek medical help quickly if you or your children begin to feel ill.

HOUSTON-AREA HEALTHCARE RESOURCES

Ask Your Nurse (24-hour service)	713-633-2255
Fort Bend Family Health Center	281-342-4530
Good Neighbor Healthcare Center	713-529-3597
Harris County Hospital District	713-566-6400
City of Houston Health & Human Services Dept	713-794-9320
San Jose Clinic	713-228-9411

In stressful circumstances, people may try to escape their problems through excessive use of alcohol or drugs. Using this method to deal with difficult situations often creates a whole new set of problems and causes more stress for everyone involved. If you suspect that you or a family member are misusing alcohol or drugs, you may want to turn to a professional who has experience in this area.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

Bay Area Council on Drugs and Alcohol, Inc	281-212-2900
Career & Recovery Resources, Inc	713-754-7000
The Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse/Houston.....	713-942-4100
Fort Bend Regional Council on Alcohol/Drug Abuse.....	281-207-2400

Getting Back to Work

If you have lost your job as a result of the disaster, you may be eligible for unemployment benefits. Unemployment benefits are available through the Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA).

You will want to apply for unemployment benefits as soon as possible as this may affect the amount of money you receive. You must make your application in person at any Texas Workforce Commission office. You can call for eligibility requirements and for the location of the office nearest to you.

TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR HELP UNDER DISASTER UNEMPLOYMENT YOU MUST:

- Have worked or been scheduled to work in the disaster area, but because of the disaster no longer have a job, a place to work in the area, or you could not get to your work because of disaster damage; or
- Have become the head of the household and need employment because the head of household died as a result of the disaster.
- If you were self-employed but have lost all or part of your livelihood as a result of this disaster, you must provide an income tax form (Schedules SE and Schedule C or Schedule F) or other proof of your self-employment to receive disaster unemployment benefits.

You can call 1-800-621-FEMA (TTY: 1-800-462-7585) or the local unemployment office, Texas Workforce Commission at 281-983-1100, or if you're outside of the local Houston calling area, dial 1-800-939-6631.

EMPLOYMENT

Career & Recovery Resources, Inc	713-754-7000
Houston Area Urban League.....	713-393-8700
Northwest Assistance Ministries (NAM).....	281-885-4555
Workforce Solutions	1-888-469-5627
www.wrksolutions.com	

OTHER BENEFITS

Food Stamps (Lone Star Card)	1-800-777-7328
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When a disaster strikes, people react in many different ways...

HEROISM

In the midst of a life-threatening emergency adrenaline begins pumping hard and fast. The “fight or flight” instinct of self-preservation kicks into high gear. We have all heard the stories of heroism that take place following a disaster by ordinary people as they performed amazing acts of bravery helping neighbors to safety and rescuing those unable to help themselves. Perhaps you were one of these heroes, or perhaps you witnessed someone acting courageously without thought of personal safety.

CONFUSION

As the height of the disaster subsides, confusion sets in. There is much activity associated with locating loved ones, confirming the whereabouts of friends and neighbors and, finally, returning to assess the damage. Finally, there is much uncertainty about what to do next.

DISILLUSIONMENT

In the days and weeks that follow the disaster, there is a fuller realization of the extent of the damage. It often becomes evident that many familiar aspects of everyday life have changed. There is also the recognition that demand for needed resources far exceeds supply.

There is sometimes frustration and anger about the paperwork and time-consuming activities that seem to accompany each step of the disaster relief process. Services appear to be very limited and delays may seem endless. Gradually, the reality of the extensive damage caused by the storm begins to sink in.

RECOVERY

Each person and each crisis is different. There is a real grieving process that must take place. There have been many kinds of loss. It may seem that nothing will ever be the same. The steps to recovery may seem insurmountable, but each step forward takes you closer to getting your life back on track.

24-Hour Emergency Services

ABUSE, BATTERED WOMEN

*Bay Area Turning Point	281-286-2525
*The Bridge Over Troubled Waters.....	713-473-2801
*FamilyTime Foundation, Inc. - Crisis Helpline	281-446-2615
*Fort Bend County Women’s Center - Hotline.....	281-342-4357
*Houston Area Women’s Center - Hotline.....	713-528-2121
*Montgomery County Women’s Center.....	936-441-7273
or	1-888-844-6269, ext. 231
Women’s Resource and Crisis Center	409-763-1441

ABUSE, CHILD / ELDERLY & DISABLED

Children’s & Adult Protective Services	1-800-252-5400
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AMBULANCE	911
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DISASTER (FIRE, FLOOD, ETC.)

*American Red Cross.....	713-526-8300
Fire.....	911

INFORMATION & REFERRAL

*2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE	2-1-1 or 713-957-HELP
or	1-877-544-7905

MENTAL HEALTH

Hurricane Hotline	1-866-773-4243 or 1-866-773-4AID
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HARRIS COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL

Retardation Authority	713-970-7000
*Crisis Intervention	713-HOTLINE

POISON

Southeast Texas Poison Center 1- 800-222-1222

POLICE (EMERGENCIES ONLY) 911

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Alcoholics Anonymous (Intergroup Association) 713-686-6300

Spanish Line713-661-6833

Mon–Fri 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sat 8 a.m.-2 p.m.

*Bay Area Council on Drugs and Alcohol, Inc281-549-9000

Cocaine Anonymous..... 713-668-6822

*The Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse/Houston 713-942-4100

Narcotics Anonymous..... 713-661-4200

SUICIDE AND DEPRESSION

*Crisis Intervention of Houston.....713-HOTLINE (713-468-5463)

Spanish Line..... 713-526-8088

Mon, Wed & Fri, 6-10 p.m

Teen Line 713-529-8336

Mon–Thu, 4 p.m.–9 p.m.; Sat 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

* A United Way affiliate agency

There are many kinds of help available to guide you along the way. Use all the resources at your disposal to make your recovery as quick and as complete as possible.



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