Survivor Tales

EYE OVER HOUSTON

Real-life story!
And what you can do to be a survivor!
This Survivor Tale is based on the real-life experiences of a disaster survivor.

Our heartfelt thanks to those individuals who have shared their stories with us in the hope of helping others prepare to be survivors.

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#1: Eye Over Houston
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Hurricane Ike is expected to make landfall late tonight. Residents are urged to evacuate or make preparations to stay safe.

I've lived in Texas all my life, so hurricanes were nothing new. Still, it was hard to decide whether I should leave town or stay and help if I could.

Honey, do you have the emergency kit?

Got it. Just need to make sure the bird has food...

...and then we can go.
One thing was for sure—I couldn’t stay in my third floor apartment if there was a chance we’d lose electricity.

Thank goodness for our friends. Michelle! Brian! Welcome! It’ll be a bit tight, but I think we can all ride the storm out here.

6:00 pm 8:00 pm 1:00 am

Of course, no one could sleep.

HOOOWWWLLL!!
Whoa. Suddenly it's so quiet. The eye of the storm must be overhead.

My ears!

It's OK—the pressure will go away once the eye passes.

In fact, the eye of the hurricane passed directly through Houston.
By the next morning, we were able to go outside.

We weren't as bad off as areas like Galveston, but Houston still took a big hit...

Electricity was out throughout the city.
And that wasn't all. I hope no one was planning to take a bath.

But people got creative. Are you going to try to drink pool water?

No, it's for flushing the toilet!

It would be weeks before the electricity, phone lines, and the water came back.

And we shared what we had. We had block parties to eat the refrigerated food before it spoiled.

Pork chops and chicken? It's a feast!

See if those folks next door want some.

I work for an organization that supports people with disabilities, so I knew I could play a role in helping others out.

I headed to the convention center where many people had gone for shelter.

In one hall, people were checking in.

I'm bilingual. Do you need interpreters?

Another hall was set up for first aid...

And others were set up for people to rest or get food and water.
I have a manual wheelchair, so I was getting around fine. But I soon met others whose electric wheelchairs stopped working.

The battery died. Now I can't even get over to the bathroom on my own.

After calling around, we were able to get an assortment of battery chargers.

Let's set up a charging station near the cots.

I worked long days with the other volunteers to help make sure people's basic needs were met.

Mr. Dominguez and his family will need to go to a shelter for people with medical needs.

Meanwhile, Brian was trying to cope with everyday life...

How is Michelle doing at the convention center?

I don't know. My cell phone just ran out of power.

Electrical outages continue all over Houston.

Ugh! This has all gone bad, and I'm sick of canned food.

Guess I'll try my luck at the store.
What's going on?

We had to throw food out because the coolers don't work.

The canned food from our emergency kit is sounding better and better...

Getting gas was a nightmare.

I'm back!

How was your day?

Long, but we helped a lot of people.

What'll it be—chicken noodle or split pea?

Those weeks were difficult, but at least we had friends and neighbors who made it all bearable.
What advice would I give to other people if they had to go through this?

Prepare for power outages. What would it be like to be without power for two weeks?

What would no longer work—and what's your backup?

Put together an emergency kit with food, water, and supplies to last at least 3 days (or more, if you can).

If you have a disability and have the means to evacuate, consider getting out early if you can. Or find someone to stay with who can accommodate your needs.

And you can't assume that someone will rescue you.

There just won't be enough resources for all the people who need help.

We've all got to be prepared to take care of ourselves—and maybe even help someone else.
Get Ready to be a Survivor

Make an emergency plan.

Learn what hazards can cause disasters where you live. Determine your family’s needs and how you can survive these hazards. Consider the special needs of others, such as the elderly or persons with disabilities.

Develop and practice a communications plan. Would you know what to do if phone lines shut down? Have an out-of-state contact for family members to call if local lines don’t work.

Develop and practice an evacuation plan should you need to leave home. Be ready to follow evacuation requests and orders issued by local leaders.

Build an emergency kit.

This is a list of basic items for your kit. Add more when you can.

• Water (1 gallon per person per day)
• Nonperishable food (3-5 days of food per person)
• Clothes (1 change of clothes and shoes per person)
• Medications (3 days worth)
• Flashlight and batteries
• Can opener
• Battery powered radio and batteries
• Hygiene items (soap, toilet paper, toothbrush)
• First aid (bandages, antiseptic, nonprescription medicine)
• Blanket
• Special needs items such as extra eyeglasses, charged batteries for wheelchairs and hearing aids, pet food, diapers

Get involved.

For more information about getting ready for emergencies:
American Red Cross
redcross.org
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
ready.gov
Centers for Disease Control
cdc.gov
Federal Emergency Management Agency
fema.gov

Public health planning resources for communities:
Seattle & King County Advanced Practice Center
www.apctoolkits.com
NACCHO Advanced Practice Center (APC)
www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/APC/index.cfm
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