

Resources for preparedness and resilience in Houston and Harris County

Pt. 1: Alerts and preparedness

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What follows are among the best resources for alerts and preparedness for residents of Houston and Harris County. I've organized notes and links according to a simple scheme: A) Alerts; B) Preparedness. A second part will take up recovery and resilience.

A) Alerts:

- a) ReadyHarris (Harris County Homeland Security and Emergency Management) is designed to promote a culture of preparedness across the region that will be more inclusive of the role individual families, nonprofit groups, and the private sector play before, during, and after an emergency. This site provides user-friendly access to information on how to prepare for all types of disasters, highlights access to real-time alerts regarding ongoing emergencies, and connects residents with state-of-the-art tools available to help them plan, recover, and stay safe. Computer sign-up for message and e-mail alerts (<https://www.readyharris.org/>) and mobile app (only for iPhone on Apple App Store; Android app forthcoming on Google Play).
- b) Emergency – American Red Cross is designed to keep persons safe in severe weather and human-made/natural hazards. It offers the capability of monitoring people and places with real-time local alerts for severe weather and hazards, including earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, flood, tsunamis, winter storms, thunderstorms, extreme heat, and wildfire and many more. This app preloads preparedness and critical emergency content providing instant access even without mobile connectivity. It includes a toolkit with a flashlight, strobe light, and audible alarm, maps with open Red Cross shelters and other weather-related layers, and step-by-step directions on how to make a family emergency plan. Available at Apple App Store and Google Play.
- c) FEMA makes available a well-designed app that issues alerts, safety tips and resources to help before, during and after disasters. This app will receive and share real-time notifications about disasters, severe weather, and other emergencies for up to five locations nationwide. This easy-to-use resource also provides safety information, emergency preparedness tips, and disaster assistance. During disasters, the app helps locate open emergency shelters. Afterwards, the app locates Disaster Recovery Centers and connects with FEMA to apply for and monitor disaster assistance online. Available at Apple App Store and Google Play.

B) Preparedness:

- a) SBP (formerly Saint Bernard Project) (<https://sbpusa.org/what-we-do/prepare>) offers resources for residents to prepare their homes (by identifying risks, creating a family emergency plan, protecting important documents, getting the right insurance coverage, and physically protecting their homes) and for officers and members to prepare their non-profits and businesses (by training for continuity to protect people, property, finances, information, and operations). A first step for residents is completion of SBP's thorough preparedness checklist (https://sbpusa.org/public/uploads/pdfs/SBP_HomeResourceGuide_En.pdf). For non-profits and businesses, SBP presents a suite of resources to assure continuity

- (<https://sbpprotects.org/resources/business>). SBP's Houston office (see <https://sbpusa.org/where-we-help/harvey-recovery> for a summary of the organization's work in Houston) will consult with organizations and individuals to create emergency preparedness plans. SBP's Houston office is at 1420 North Sam Houston Pwy E, Suite 190, Houston, TX 77032, 929-273-3757. The Houston group has a social media presence on Instagram (search SBPHouston) and regularly posts to the SBP accounts on Facebook and Twitter (search SBP).
- b) ReadyHarris (the public face of Harris County Homeland Security and Emergency) offers a collection of resources that help Harris County residents and organizations prepare for disaster. At the home page (<https://www.readyharris.org/>), press on the tab labelled "Get Prepared" to open videos, hurricane-preparedness brochures, disaster kit checklists, evacuation and shelter guides, and pet preparedness kits. The page also has links to the six most important sites for emergency information in the county: National Weather Service, National Hurricane Center, Harris County Flood Warning System, Houston Transtar, CenterPoint Power Outage, and Harris County Pollution Control Services Department.
 - c) TexasReady (maintained by the Texas Department of State Health Services) supplements ReadyHarris by providing information and kits to prepare for tornadoes, wildfires, extreme heat, and winter storms. TexasReady, like ReadyHarris, also offers preparedness videos and checklists (<https://www.texasready.gov/>)
 - d) Texas Emergency Coalition (an alliance of local, state, national, and volunteer disaster resources) maintains an enormously helpful page of links to both general and specialized agencies and organizations (<https://www.texasteec.org/disaster-resources>). For instance, here one will find links to the Nephron Information Center (<http://kidneydisasters.org/>) and Fresenius Kidney Care (<https://www.freseniuskidneycare.com/treatment/disaster-preparation>), two vital resources for persons dependent on kidney therapies. For more general healthcare readiness, HealthcareReady (<https://healthcareready.org/>) and the Texas emergency registry, State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry (STEAR), have links on the Coalition's page (<https://tdem.texas.gov/stear/>)
 - e) The Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) (<https://tdem.texas.gov/>), maintained by Texas A & M University, manages the all-hazards emergency management plan for the state. TDEM works closely with local jurisdictions, state agencies, and federal partners to ensure greater resiliency. TDEM staff are stationed statewide and serve six different regions. Whether natural or human-made, TDEM is prepared and ready to respond to future disasters.