

# Preparing for Hurricane Season During a Pandemic

Last week officially began the Atlantic hurricane season. We are off to an early start with three named storms, the latest—Cristobal—causing floods and wind damage from Louisiana to portions of the Midwest. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, this season is predicted to be [unusually active](#) with 13 to 19 named storms on the horizon, exceeding the average of ten per season. Extreme weather threatens communities and businesses across the U.S., adding further complexity to response and recovery efforts as emergency management agencies, first responders, and community leaders continue to deal with the impacts of COVID-19.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently released its [COVID-19 Pandemic Operational Guidance for the 2020 Hurricane Season](#) to provide direction for managing disaster response during COVID-19. With the global pandemic affecting every state, tribe, and territory, business leaders across the nation have become emergency managers to protect their employers, customers, and communities. The framework in which FEMA operates is “locally executed, state managed, and federally supported,” which makes it even more imperative that businesses work closely with local partners to put preparedness plans into motion that address the vulnerabilities for hurricanes and other hazards and comply with new regulations brought forth by COVID-19.

Here are some questions businesses should consider as they prepare for the hurricane season according to the FEMA guidance:

- Do you have a plan to respond and have all required tasks assigned?
- Do you have a plan to determine which personnel must be physically deployed to the field and how they will be protected through PPE and other measures?
- Have you considered the extra time it may take to evacuate given the need for social distancing?
- Do you know where employees will need to be evacuated and sheltered?

Businesses can also assess their preparedness through the resources provided by the U.S. Chamber Foundation, as well as other non-profits providing emergency relief.

- Take the U.S. Chamber Foundation’s [Business Readiness Quiz](#) to see how prepared your business is for the next disaster.
- Implement the [Top 20 Tips for Business Preparedness, created](#) as part of the Chamber Foundation’s Resilience in a Box program.

- Equip your employees with resources from the [American Red Cross](#) and [SBP](#).

Emergency management agencies are already taking steps to support businesses in their efforts to prepare for disasters in the midst of the current pandemic. For example, FEMA has adjusted its policies to allow for non-congregate sheltering – including hotels, motels and dormitories – in the initial days of an incident. Steps businesses take now to invest in their disaster preparedness can prove to be lifesaving in a time like this, allowing them to weather any storm that may come their way.

—Brooks Nelson, Senior Director, Global Resilience, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Corporate Citizenship Center