

We are now facing another hurricane season, and the Houston Bar Association is providing the following information for disaster preparation and recovery. The information is designed to protect your law office, home, employees and self, and to address issues associated with each. While many firms already have disaster plans in place, we hope the resource links below provide you with quick access to information you need as you prepare or recover.

[American Bar Association Disaster Preparedness Committee Resources](#)

[Surviving a Disaster: A Lawyer's Guide to Disaster Planning](#)

[State Bar of Texas Resources for Disaster Relief](#)

[U.S. Government's Disaster Planning Website](#)

[City of Houston Emergency Operations Center](#)

[Regional Joint Information Center for Harris County](#)

[Houston Transtar Traffic Website](#)

Other Resources:

- [When Bad Things Happen: 60 Minutes to Save Your Practice](#) – Compiled from materials developed by the American Bar Association Law Practice Management Section's Practice Management Advisors Committee
- [Planning for Disaster Prevention and/or Recovery](#) – Prepared for the Law Office Management Institute, March 23, 2003 by Roland K. Johnson of Harris, Finley and Bogle and Warren H. Gould of the Law Office of Warren Gould, Fort Worth, Texas.
- [Technology Related Resources for Disaster Relief](#) – Prepared by the American Bar Association

In addition to these links, Houston area law firm administrators and staff have provided practical information to consider:

**If evacuating a building:**

- Speak to building management about security of the building and the building disaster plan (i.e., will the building have someone there 24 hours, even in the storm?) and security systems (i.e., do they default open with a lack of power?). If

- there will not be sufficient security, important equipment should be locked behind doors that are off the building master. Lock all doors, credenzas and files before leaving. Hide valuables.
- Power off all equipment before leaving. If the power goes off, the return power could damage computers, printers, copiers, etc.
  - Perform a daily backup of your data files and verify the backup restoration. Be sure you don't leave backup tapes in the office; even a fireproof safe could be destroyed. Have a designated off site storage for backups.
  - Copy and store off site your original firm and network software, as well as software license and registration codes.
  - Bag your trash and take it to the lobby or in a loading dock dumpster on your way out. Days old trash really stinks up small places quickly and is not easily dissipated.
  - Designate a time and place for the office to return or check in so that everyone can be accounted.
  - Consider establishing a "phone chain" and designate a person in charge to initiate calls to provide information to employees. Develop a list of home phone numbers, cell phone numbers and emergency contact numbers.

**If stuck in the building:**

- Relocate your car in the garage or parking lot to a high point to avoid flooding.
- Have on hand flashlights, light sticks and batteries for a radio to monitor the conditions and find out when it is safe to leave.
- Bring extra non-perishable food, water and clean clothes to work just in case - even if you leave the office you may be forced to return if there is no safe route home.
- Stay away from the windows - flying objects could break the windows.
- Keep your doors locked and check in with building security regularly so that they know people are still in your office.

Please take the time now to prepare in advance for hurricane season. You will be glad that you did if we are hit with another storm this season.