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# School Facilities Hurricane Season Preparedness



## Be Prepared

June 1st marks the beginning of hurricane season each year, as facilities management professionals take proactive steps to prepare for potential impacts.

For school facilities managers, this means carefully assessing how hurricanes could affect their buildings, students, and staff, and emphasizing the need for thorough preparations long before any storm warnings are issued. Being prepared well in advance is key to avoiding last-minute scrambling and ensuring the safety of everyone involved!

**To assist in this preparation – in conjunction with guidance from the International Facilities Management Association (IFMA)<sup>1</sup> – we recommend school facilities managers follow these 10 steps to stay prepared and safeguard their facilities against potential hurricanes:**



### Establish an Emergency Response Team and Plan

Collaborate with other departments to form a dedicated emergency response team with clearly defined roles, resources, and technologies. Consider engaging with external business recovery teams or seeking assistance from local, state, and federal agencies like FEMA.



### Strengthen Facility Infrastructure

Identify vulnerabilities specific to your facilities, such as flood-prone areas in coastal regions, and implement protective measures like flood protection designs and insurance coverage. Secure vulnerable areas like glass windows with boarding.



### Protect Surrounding Environment

Assess and secure smaller items around the facility, such as signs, flagpoles, landscaping, and fences, which could become hazardous in high winds.



### Develop and Post Evacuation Plans

Create detailed evacuation plans, including physical maps on each floor displaying safe exit routes via stairwells, exits, parking lots, and surrounding streets. Ensure evacuation procedures are executed prior to the hurricane's arrival.



### **Backup Data**

Regularly back up computer data off-site to ensure data integrity. In anticipation of a hurricane, remove on-site data promptly. Utilize cloud-based systems for critical operations like payroll and customer management.



### **Ensure Backup Power**

Install backup power systems like generators, uninterruptable power supplies, batteries, and emergency lighting to maintain facility operations during power outages caused by hurricanes.



### **Prepare Shelter-in-Place Facilities**

Equip designated facilities with essential supplies such as food, sleeping accommodations, bathing facilities, and emergency kits to accommodate employees who must remain on-site during the storm.



### **Enable Remote Operations**

Facilitate remote work capabilities for employees unable to access the facility, ensuring continuity of critical operations. Arrange advance travel and lodging for employees requiring relocation.



### **Establish Communication Protocols**

Develop robust communication strategies to disseminate facility plans to employees, families, customers, suppliers, and media outlets. Establish backup communication channels via cellphones, radios, and other means.



### **Conduct Drills**

Conduct regular drills to practice emergency procedures, enhancing employee readiness and response efficiency in real emergencies.

Additionally, facilities can support community needs post-hurricane by collaborating with local emergency management offices and nonprofit organizations to provide essential services such as:



### Disaster Relief Warehousing

Convert facilities into storage spaces for disaster relief kits distributed by volunteer organizations.



### Community Spaces

Offer offices or multipurpose rooms to nonprofit organizations through partnerships with National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster.



### Charging Stations

Provide electricity for charging essential devices like cellphones and medical equipment for emergency responders and community members.



### Food Services

Utilize sanitary kitchen facilities to prepare and distribute meals for responders and community members in need.



### Emergency Preparedness

Preparing facilities adequately ahead of hurricane season is crucial for protecting lives and property. Early preparation not only mitigates risks but also ensures readiness to support community recovery efforts in times of crisis.

Preventative maintenance, supported by CMMS, plays a critical role in enhancing hurricane preparedness for facilities management. Here's how they can enhance your planning:

# 1

## Identifying Vulnerabilities

Through regular inspections and maintenance tasks scheduled in CMMS, facilities managers can identify vulnerabilities in building infrastructure that could exacerbate damage during a hurricane. This proactive approach allows for timely repairs and reinforcements before a storm hits, such as securing loose roof shingles or reinforcing windows.

# 2

## Ensuring Equipment Readiness

CMMS enables facilities managers to track and schedule preventative maintenance for essential equipment like generators, emergency lighting systems, and HVAC units. Ensuring these systems are in optimal condition minimizes the risk of equipment failure during power outages or adverse weather conditions caused by hurricanes.

# 3

## Securing Backup Power

Facilities equipped with backup power systems are crucial during hurricanes when power outages are common. CMMS helps in scheduling regular inspections and testing of generators and UPS systems to ensure they are operational when needed most.

# 4

## Managing Critical Supplies

CMMS can be utilized to manage inventories of emergency supplies such as batteries, first aid kits, and emergency food supplies. It ensures these supplies are stocked, accessible, and ready for deployment before and after a hurricane strikes.

# 5

## Data and Document Management

CMMS facilitates the storage and management of critical documents and data related to building layouts, emergency plans, and equipment specifications. This information is invaluable for quickly accessing and disseminating necessary information during hurricane preparations and responses.

# 6

## Facilitating Communication

CMMS can streamline communication among facilities management teams, emergency response personnel, and other stakeholders. It ensures that everyone is informed about maintenance schedules, emergency procedures, and the status of facility readiness before, during, and after a hurricane.

# 7

## Tracking and Reporting

CMMS provides detailed tracking and reporting capabilities, allowing facilities managers to monitor maintenance activities, equipment status, and compliance with safety

standards. This data-driven approach helps in evaluating the effectiveness of hurricane preparedness plans and making informed decisions for future improvements.

## Conclusion

Preventative maintenance supported by CMMS is instrumental in enhancing hurricane preparedness by proactively addressing vulnerabilities, ensuring equipment reliability, managing critical supplies, facilitating communication, and providing comprehensive data management. By leveraging these tools effectively, facilities can minimize downtime, mitigate risks, and ensure the safety and functionality of their facilities during and after severe weather events like hurricanes.



## Sources

1 [Hurricane Preparation Planning for Facility Management, IFMALI](#)

## About Brightly Software

Brightly, a Siemens company, enables organizations to manage the entire lifecycle of their assets, facilities and infrastructure. As the global leader in intelligent asset management solutions for more than 25 years, Brightly's sophisticated cloud-based platform is expertly designed to improve capital planning through smarter, data-driven decision making, empower technicians to predict, prioritize and manage preventative maintenance activities, and support organizations to achieve sustainability, compliance and efficiency goals. Combined with award-winning training, legendary support and managed services, more than 12,000 clients worldwide depend on Brightly to optimize their teams, operations and strategic planning initiatives. For more information, visit [brightlysoftware.com](https://brightlysoftware.com)