

Shoreline

Raymond E. Swienton, MD, FACEP; Thomas McLaughlin, DO, FACEP

Shoreline: a vantage point; a place giving strategic advantage. Yet when it is the location of an impending hurricane landfall, a shoreline's resourceful strength is staring at its vulnerability. The "calm before the storm," a cliché to some, is a time of critical decision-making to those who provide medical services near the shores. Evacuate or shelter-in-place? This was the critical decision facing CHRISTUS Spohn Hospital Corpus Christi – Shoreline as the situational awareness continued to gain confidence that indeed Tropical Storm (soon to become Hurricane) Harvey was barreling down on the Corpus Christi region of Texas.

With hundreds of patients and hundreds more hospital staff directly in the impending storm's path, the time had come to weigh duty to continue operations as a critical piece of local health care infrastructure versus evacuation with closure of the hospital. "We have been here before," recalls Tom McLaughlin, DO, FACEP, Chairman and Program Director of Emergency Medicine at CHRISTUS Spohn Hospital Corpus Christi – Shoreline and its Texas A&M University School of Medicine Affiliated Emergency Medicine Residency. Dr. McLaughlin described the long history and personal experiences during prior hurricane encounters such as the summer of 2008 when the Texas coast was pounded by Hurricanes Dolly, Gustav, and most notably, Ike. "We made the decision in 2008 to shelter-in-place," he notes. "It was the right decision then; now we face a similar situation and critical decision to make."

The decision to evacuate or shelter-in-place a hospital is vastly complex with a myriad of consequent management considerations with limited situational awareness and rapidly evolving dynamic conditions. The duty to continually serve the community and the onboard patients in the facility must be rapidly yet thoroughly vetted with the eminent, potentially life-threatening risks to patients and personnel during sustained operations.

Closing a hospital, losing a critical piece of local health care infrastructure, during a time that your community will need it most, is most assuredly a gut-wrenching decision. Evacuation is a very dangerous option. The movement of acutely ill and injured

patients is fraught with concerns of decompensation in patient health status, transportation mishaps, and communication limitations with yet-to-be determined accepting facilities and health providers assuming care. This difficult decision is based on a well-experienced emergency management and hospital leadership team. It is one fostered over years of dedication to facility and staff preparedness and countless hours of disaster planning, providing disaster education and training through drills and exercises. Knowing the limitations of the facility and the personnel is a critical decision-making piece. The sustainability of public works, including electricity, potable water, and sewage and waste management; the availability of communication lines; the accessibility of roadways for supply chains and personnel; and the assurance of security, law, and order within the community are also considerations.

As shared by Dr. McLaughlin, the Shoreline emergency department is a beacon, a lighthouse for those in the community, and they wanted to keep it on. And keep it on they did! Shoreline sheltered-in-place over 400 mission-essential hospital personnel and over 200 patients during the portal of entry of Hurricane Harvey, which made landfall on the Texas coast that fateful Friday evening, August 25, 2017. The emergency department and the hospital overall provided continuous care throughout Hurricane Harvey, which is becoming a historic incident with its epic catastrophic flooding in Texas.

The personnel within Shoreline and all the personnel that support its operation throughout the Corpus Christi area are Texas heroes. A hero, one who sustains their duties and services during austere and uncertain times with significant risks, clearly describes these Texans. Like them, there are a multitude of heroes across all sectors of the response and recovery efforts ongoing.

The catastrophic disaster resulting from Hurricane Harvey is acutely ongoing throughout the entire Texas coastal area. The unprecedented scope and scale of devastation from flooding is only beginning to be understood. With tens of thousands of people actively rescued, hundreds of thousands being sheltered, and millions of lives impacted, the Great State of Texas has taken a serious blow. Texas, known

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for its resolve, is showing strength in leadership and the resilience of its people.

Howdy, to all who have come to assist Texas in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey! Texas is so grateful for the tremendous outpouring of assistance from throughout these United States of America. Federal, public, and private organizations, agencies, and entities have embraced supporting Texas in remarkable ways and we will be forever appreciative. The road to recovery is only beginning in Texas, a destination that will undoubtedly strengthen the Lone Star State.

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Cover Images:



Overturned generator outside hospital during Hurricane Harvey. Source: Google Images.



Scene from outside CHRISTUS Spohn Hospital as Hurricane Harvey makes landfall. Source: Raymond Swienton, MD.



Dr Anson Huynh, Dr John Carroll, Dr Yvonne Hinojosa, Dr Michael Zhao, Dr Aaron Adamson, Dr Kiran Roberts, Dr Michelle Roth, Dr Salim Surani, Dr Mark Huber, Dr Shani Italiya, Dr Sean Hutzler, Dr Nick Jones, Dr Pratchi Italiya, Dr Joseph Yard, Dr Salsabeal Hassanin, Dr Adnan Kahn, Dr Oyewale Bello, Dr Laura McGrath, Dr Nick Lockwood, Dr Haley Sutherland, Dr Thomas McLaughlin, Dr Chris Sutherly. Source: Raymond Swienton, MD.



Dr Laura Sample, Dr Laura McGrath, Dr Greg Colvin, Dr Joseph Yard, Dr Sean Hutzler, Dr Thomas McLaughlin, Dr Kit Mock, Dr Guy Youngblood, Dr Nick Lockwood. Source: Raymond Swienton, MD.

Additional Images:



Dr Laura McGrath, Dr Kit Mock, Dr Guy Youngblood, Dr Nick Lockwood. Source: Raymond Swinton, MD.



Dr Adnan Kahn, Dr Michelle Roth, Dr Mark Huber, Dr Matt Strawn, Dr Tom McLaughlin, Dr Chris Sutherly, Dr Michael Simmons. Source: Raymond Swinton, MD.