

As hurricane harvey targets Texas, tips to protect yourself

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(HealthDay)—By 1 p.m. Thursday, the Gulf of Mexico storm dubbed

Harvey had officially gained hurricane status—and forecasters say it could deliver a devastating blow to East Texas by late Friday.

In fact, high [storm](#) surges and winds up to 115 miles per hour could make Harvey the first Category 3 or higher storm to make landfall in the United States in 12 years, says the U.S. National Hurricane Center. The last such storm was Hurricane Wilma back in 2005.

"Trying not to be dramatic, but I fear epic flood catastrophe," Marshall Shepherd, a former president of the American Meteorological Society, said in a tweet.

Computer model predictions from the [hurricane](#) center have Harvey making landfall in Texas Friday night, somewhere between Port Mansfield and San Luis Pass, with the major city of Corpus Christi very nearby.

Rainfall could exceed 20 inches, experts say, in a storm that might take four to six days to expend itself. Storm surges could be 6 to 10 feet high in coastal areas.

"Somebody is going to get a rainstorm to tell their grandkids about," Bill Read, a former director of the National Hurricane Center, told the *Washington Post*.

And Houston, America's fourth-largest city, may also be in peril.

Houston could see anywhere from 10 to 20 inches of rain—especially on Saturday and Sunday—in an inundation that could prove "devastating" for the city, according to local meteorologist Matt Lanza.

A sudden onrush of this amount of rain falling northwest of Houston would mean that "all that water has to push through the Bayou networks

across the city into Galveston Bay," he explained to the *Post*.

Winds clocked at 80 mph were already being recorded by 1 p.m. Thursday. On Wednesday, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott had declared a state of emergency for 30 counties in the southeast portion of the state.

"Harvey has intensified quickly this morning, and is now forecast to be a [major hurricane](#) at landfall, bringing life-threatening storm surge, rainfall, and wind hazards to portions of the Texas coast," the hurricane center said in its 11 a.m. discussion.

Get prepared

So what can average Texans do to protect themselves? On its Ready.gov homepage, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security offers up this guidance:

- Find out where to go. Determine now from your [local emergency management](#) agency where the hurricane evacuation center(s) in your area are located, and the routes to get there. Information for many communities can be located by searching on the internet under keywords "[your town] alerts."
- Keep your car in good running order, with a full tank of gas. Cars should contain emergency supplies and extra clothes.
- Organize your "go-bag." This is your disaster supply kit: Things like a flashlight, batteries, cash, first-aid supplies, medications, and copies of your critical information in case evacuation is needed.
- Gather home supplies. In case you're not told to evacuate, make sure you stock up at home in the event of many days of power outage—things like water, food and lighting.
- When the storm is only a few hours away, listen to storm reports

every 30 minutes via radio, TV or the internet.

- Make a family communications plan. This includes discussing beforehand with family members details on how you plan to receive official emergency alerts and warnings, what your plan is for shelter, evacuation routes and other issues specific to your household. As the hurricane approaches, stay in touch via text or social media—phone lines are often overloaded. Make sure your phones are fully charged before the storm hits.

Bolster your home against the hurricane's onslaught

You can do this by:

- Trimming damaged trees and their branches to minimize the odds they'll break off and damage your home.
- Clearing and secure rain gutters.
- Strengthening vulnerable areas such as windows and doors, including garage doors. Cover all windows, ideally with shutters or 5/8-inch grade plywood.
- Trying to obtain a portable generator in case of power outages. Keep these devices at least 20 feet away from windows and doors and protect them from moisture. NEVER try and power the house by plugging a portable generator into a household wall socket.
- Bringing in loose objects that could fly around and damage your home or people nearby things—such as garbage cans, propane tanks, patio furniture.

As the storm approaches turn your fridge to the coldest setting. If you lose power, food will last longer.

More information: Find out more about Hurricane Harvey, and how to prepare, at the [U.S. National Hurricane Center](#).

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