



Preparing for Hurricanes

Hurricanes are strong storm systems characterised with thunderstorms producing strong winds and heavy rains.

In the Caribbean, the Hurricane season spans June 1 to November 30 each year. Additionally, the severity and direction of these storm systems are accurately predicted by Meteorologists. As a result, we are better able to prepare for hurricanes than for other natural disasters.

Planning for a hurricane will determine how quickly a business can resume normal operations thereby minimizing losses.

Vulnerabilities

As telecommunications operators, hurricanes can possibly impact our operations in several ways including:

- ✓ Damage to outside plant infrastructure such as optical and copper cables, poles, etc. through landslips or high winds
- ✓ Communication towers and antennas including microwave and cell sites either completely destroyed or partially impacted
- ✓ Flooding and water ingress into lower-lying buildings and properties
- ✓ Inability to access offices and critical sites due to floods, road damage, etc.
- ✓ Staff members personally affected and therefore unable to support operations
- ✓ Temporary loss of critical utilities (water, electricity) and support services (generator fuel supply, etc.) leading to possible network failure.

Hurricane Preparedness

The following activities should be carried out in the preparation for hurricane emergency management:

- ✓ Develop a Hurricane Emergency Plan in writing and distribute to staff.
This plan should detail:
 - Preparatory measures
 - Responsibilities of key personnel (teams) before and after the event
 - Communication methods
 - Plan Maintenance
 - Event evaluation method



- ✓ **Create a Preparation Schedule**
A preparation schedule should include a simulation/drill to test the effectiveness of the written plan. This is geared towards identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the written Hurricane emergency Plan and provides an opportunity to improve on response procedures.

- ✓ **Establish a Communication Plan**
A communications Team should be established to provide information to internal and external stakeholders/customers. Ensure that your customers/stakeholders know how to contact you in the event of a hurricane.
Alternate communication means are satellite phones for international calls and two-way radios for local communication.

- ✓ **Develop restoration Teams**
Identify employees who are critical to the hurricane restoration process and ensure that they know how to respond. Besides technical experts, the HR and IT staff are also critical to restoration in a hurricane emergency.

- ✓ **Update Employee Contact information**
Staff current contact details including home addresses and telephone numbers are required so that they can be accounted for as well as to provide vital support should the need arise.

- ✓ **Verify the Regulations that govern your business during a Crisis**
Regulations governing the operations of your business in a crisis should be documented and communicated to the restoration teams. This should include staff labour law requirements.

- ✓ **Stock critical Spares and Basic Food**
Critical Spares should be stocked for the prompt restoration of service. Non-perishable food items should be available for staff working during crisis. Additionally first aid items should be readily available. These should include bandages, water, flashlights and cleaning supplies.