

Xavier University of Louisiana

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Here's information which we hope you don't need BUT is presented just in case.

New Orleans, like other coastal cities along the Gulf and Atlanta Coasts in the U.S., sometimes has severe weather caused by tropical disturbances. Although we do not really expect such a weather system to come our way while Xavier's summer programs are in session this year, the following is some basic information which everyone should know—just in case. If a storm should actually head toward New Orleans, the local television and radio stations would provide detailed information about it and Xavier will provide instructions about what students on campus should do.

What is a "tropical disturbance"? A tropical disturbance is an area of low pressure which forms over tropical or subtropical waters. In the northern hemisphere the air in a tropical disturbance rotates in a counterclockwise direction. Generally, tropical disturbances intensify while traveling over hot tropical water but slow down and break apart once they reach land. Tropical disturbances are classified according to the sustained wind speed within them. The major classifications are...

<u>Classification</u>	<u>Brief Description</u>
Tropical Disturbance	Organized thunderstorm activities not associated with a weather front
Tropical Depression	A tropical low pressure system in which maximum sustained wind is less than 39 mph
Tropical Storm	A tropical low pressure system in which maximum sustained wind is 39-73 mph
Hurricane	A tropical low pressure system in which maximum sustained wind is 74 mph or higher

How do you know when a tropical disturbance is near? The U.S. Weather Service watches the tropics very closely during the "hurricane season" (June 1 thru November 30) and distributes the information it receives widely. Therefore, all local radio and TV stations in the U.S. regularly report the presence of tropical disturbances in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. To determine how close a given storm is to New Orleans, listen to the weather report to obtain the coordinates of the "eye" (which is more or less the center) of the storm and then compare those to the coordinates of New Orleans (30 W and 90 N). To determine how much of a threat the storm is viewed to be to a given area, listen to for the "watches" and "warnings" which are issued by the National Weather Bureau. These are...

- A "**Tropical Storm Watch**" means a tropical storm (wind speed 39-73 mph) might pose a threat within 36 hours
- A "**Tropical Storm Warning**" means a tropical storm (wind speed 39-73 mph) might pose a threat within 24 hours
- A "**Hurricane Watch**" means a hurricane (wind speed more than 73 mph) might pose a threat within 36 hours
- A "**Hurricane Warning**" means a hurricane (wind speed more than 73 mph) might pose a threat within 24 hours

How can a parent find out what is happening in New Orleans if a storm approaches? Our summer programs are early in the hurricane season when there are relatively few storms and those which do form usually arise in the Caribbean or Gulf of Mexico and, generally, are relatively weak because they don't spend much time over hot water before striking land. (Hurricanes lose their strength rapidly when passing over land.) The dangerous hurricanes are the ones which form off the west coast of Africa later in the season and have lots of time to strengthen as they move westward over the hot tropical waters of the Atlantic. If a storm should form in the Gulf (or come into it from elsewhere), we will place periodic advisories on our phone mail (504-483-7646) so that parents can obtain information about the situation here on a twenty-four basis.

What should one do if a major tropical disturbance (i.e. a hurricane should approach)? There are three things to worry about in a hurricane. The first is potential damage by the wind. The second is flooding from the

"storm surge," rising water pushed inward by the wind. The third is flooding from the water from the rain which accompanies a hurricane. What one should do depends on where one lives.

- ❖ **If you live on the coast, the best thing to do is evacuate**—something which has to be done before the storm surge (which is well ahead of the hurricane) hits. When a hurricane enters the Gulf of Mexico and heads toward New Orleans, civil authorities in the coastal parishes (Plaquemines, Jefferson, LaFourche, etc.) begin to evacuate low-lying areas as early as 48 hours before the anticipated landfall of a hurricane even though they know that hurricanes frequently change directions. They have to evacuate that early in order to get out before the storm surge closes the roads. Similarly, the companies which run the oil platforms out in the Gulf, also evacuate two to three days before landfall is anticipated just to be sure they can get everyone out. Because of the reoccurring danger of hurricane damage, all of the parishes in Southeast Louisiana have evacuation plans for low-lying areas and designated shelters where the evacuees can go.
- ❖ **If you live a little further away from the coast (such as in New Orleans)** and live in a well-constructed house or apartment building that is in good condition and is not in a flood-prone area (such as XU's dormitories), you should be okay as long as you take precautions. These precautions (which are available from every TV station in New Orleans as well as from many groceries, hardware stores, etc.) include...
 - taping windows to prevent glass from being blown if the window breaks,
 - securing all shutters, screens, etc. so they cannot be blown away by the wind,
 - finding a location which is protected from the wind and offers the possibility of moving upward if it floods, and
 - obtaining a supply of water (a gallon/person/day), food which does not require cooking or refrigeration (such as tuna, vienna sausage, etc.), a portable radio with fresh batteries, supplies of medications, and first-aid supplies.

What will Xavier do for students who live in the dormitory if a hurricane approaches? Hurricanes are notorious for wandering around changing direction for no apparent reason. Therefore, the University would merely lay in supplies and stay alert unless the City of New Orleans is placed under a hurricane warning. If we should be placed under a hurricane warning, the University will issue directions regarding what to do if the hurricane continues to approach the City. If a hurricane actually does approach, approximately twelve hours before expected landfall, the University will ask all students on campus to bring bedding and necessary medication to a designated location (one of the interior hallways on the 2nd or 3rd floors of a dormitory) where water and food supplies are available. At the same time, the University would identify a number of full-time staff (including medical personnel as well as personnel from the Office of Engineering Programs) who would move into the same location and remain as long as danger exists. While no one can guarantee that an individual would be safe when a natural disaster such as a hurricane hits, students living in XU's dormitories should be okay as long as they follow the University's emergency instructions and remain in the dorms where they are safe from wind (inside a solidly-built building), are safe from flooding (because they are ten or more feet above ground level), have water/food until the hurricane passes, and have adult supervision. Please note that the students who remain on campus during the hurricane should not leave the dorms until XU personnel indicate it is okay because of snakes and other wild animals in the flood waters, pollution in flood waters, the possibility of downed power lines, etc.

How soon after a hurricane can parents expect a call to let them know that all is okay? If a hurricane should pass through New Orleans while our summer programs are in session, we will contact each set of parents as soon as the storm has passed and the telephone system is working. However, parents should note that storm conditions often exist as much as six hours before and after the "eye" passes a given location and the telephone system may not work immediately afterward because of high winds and flooding. Therefore, it might be as much as twenty-four hours before we are able to call.

Can a student leave the City if a hurricane approaches? Parents who wish their students to leave may give them permission to do so. However, it should be noted that the decision to leave would have to be made very early (36 hours or so ahead of the hurricane) because of flooding due to the storm surge ahead of a storm and heavy traffic as people gather supplies and/or evacuate.