Why
BEST PRACTICES
Matter

Effective communication is critical for the successful management of a crisis. The following recommendations for improving communication are based on interviews with government officials, media representatives, and forecasters from parishes affected by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. This list of BEST PRACTICES is a distillation of their communication successes and challenges in dealing with disaster.

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ABOUT THE PROJECT
HIPIP is a two-stage project designed to study effective hurricane communication, funded by the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Coastal Storms Program. The information here is a result of in-depth interviews of southeastern Louisiana experts conducted to gauge how these decision-makers manage their crisis communication. The second stage of the project focused on the end users. A telephone survey of southeastern Louisiana residents examined how information sources, anxiety, crisis experience, storm knowledge, and demographics influence future decision-making— including why some residents choose to evacuate and others do not. More information is available at www.lsu.edu/hipip

ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS
The principal investigator is Professor Renee Edwards of the Department of Communication Studies. Co-investigators include Assistant Professor Stephanie Grey, also of Comm. Studies, Assistant Professor David Brown, of the Department of Geography and Anthropology, and Associate Professor Andrea Miller, of the Manship School of Mass Communication. The Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness is the grant's community partner.

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# BEST PRACTICES for Effective Hurricane Communication

## GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

**Be Proactive in Educating the Public**
Gaining compliance during a hurricane requires year-round efforts. Waiting until the storms hit invites disaster. Having an emergency plan AND a public relations plan in place before hurricane season is paramount for success during an actual crisis.

**Keep Media in the Loop**
Important announcements such as evacuations are more effective when the media has advance warning.

**Keep Other Parish/County Officials in the Loop**
What happens in one region affects other regions—from lodging, gas and supply needs to traffic and police concerns.

## SCIENCE COMMUNITY

**Be Proactive in Communication with Media and Government**
Anticipating their needs can help them formulate and convey a consistent message, thus making their jobs easier and saving residents’ lives and property.

**Have a Backup Plan When Technology Fails**
Create a hierarchy of communication channels that anticipates a complete technological failure. Know which channels serve as backups and have people on standby ready to trigger those options.

**Avoid Jargon**
Do not assume all understand the language of your technical expertise. Speak plainly to reduce uncertainty and confirm the audience's understanding.

## MEDIA

**Identify Your “Point Person” in the Scientific Community before the Storm**
Don't waste time by asking different people in the same agency the same questions, or by having multiple staff in your organization ask the same questions repeatedly.

**Create a List of Personal Cell Phone Numbers**
Getting your contact on the phone can be difficult during a crisis. Be sure you can reach them anytime, anywhere in case of an emergency.

**Spread the Message**
In this age of media choice, use all forms of media at your disposal, including social media.

## ALL DECISION-MAKERS

Avoid Burnout  ⚫  Build Trust  ⚫  Create a Communication Network