

# Hurricane Season Preparedness in the Rio Grande Valley

*Presented at the Task Force of Border Health Officials Meeting*

Abdul Kamara

Public Health Emergency Preparedness Manager

Public Health Region 11



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

Texas Department of State  
Health Services

# Welcome & Agenda

- Introduction
- Regional Hurricane Risks
- Readiness
- Post-Hurricane Recovery
- Operation Border Health
- Resources

# The Rio Grande Valley – At Risk

- Proximity to the Gulf
- Flat terrain increases flood risk
- Densely populated border communities
- Limited infrastructure in rural areas

## Historical Context

### Hurricane Beulah (1967)

- Category 5 in the Gulf, Category 3 at landfall
- 115 mph winds, 27 tornadoes, severe flooding
- Set precedent for Valley-wide disaster response

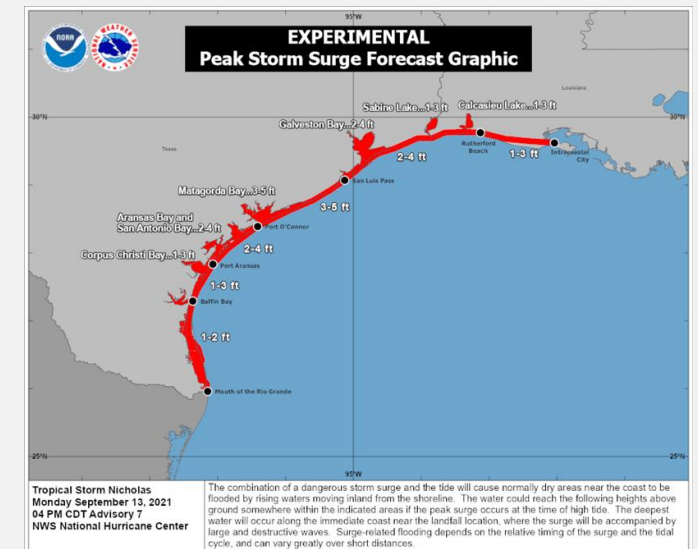


# Hurricane Season Basics

- Official Season: June 1 – November 30
- Peak risk: August to October
- Gulf hurricanes often curve toward South Texas

## Common Hazards

- Storm Surge
- Flash Flooding
- Damaging Winds
- Tornadoes
- Infrastructure Disruption



# Common Hazards in the RGV

## Storm Surge

- Coastal inundation up to several feet
- Risk to Port Isabel, South Padre Island, and Brownsville
- Saltwater intrusion risks agriculture

## Inland Flooding

- RGV is low-lying
- Poor drainage in colonias and rural areas
- Past storms caused flooding 50+ miles inland

## Wind Damage

- Mobile homes and older housing stock especially vulnerable
- Debris risks from poorly secured outdoor items



# Power of Preparedness

**Preparedness can save lives and property.**

- Reduces injuries and stress
- Enhances recovery speed
- Protects vulnerable groups



# What is an Emergency Supply Kit?

- Basic supplies for 3+ days
- Keep kits at home, work, and in the car
- Customize for your family's needs

## Emergency Supply Kit- Essentials

- 1 gallon water/person/day
- Non-perishable food
- Manual can opener
- Flashlight + batteries
- First aid kit
- Prescription meds
- Infant formula & diapers
- Pet food & leash
- Hygiene items
- Important documents (ID, insurance)



# Emergency Supply Kit – Pro Tips

**Preparedness can save lives and property.**

- Use plastic bins or waterproof bags
- Check expiration dates every 6 months
- Store in an accessible location



# Strengthen Your Home

- Install hurricane shutters or board windows
- Reinforce garage doors
- Anchor down outdoor furniture
- Flood Protection
  - Install sump pumps with battery backup
  - Elevate HVAC and electrical panels
  - Use sandbags if in flood-prone zone
- Trim & Clear
  - Remove weak tree limbs
  - Clean gutters and drains
  - Clear yard of debris

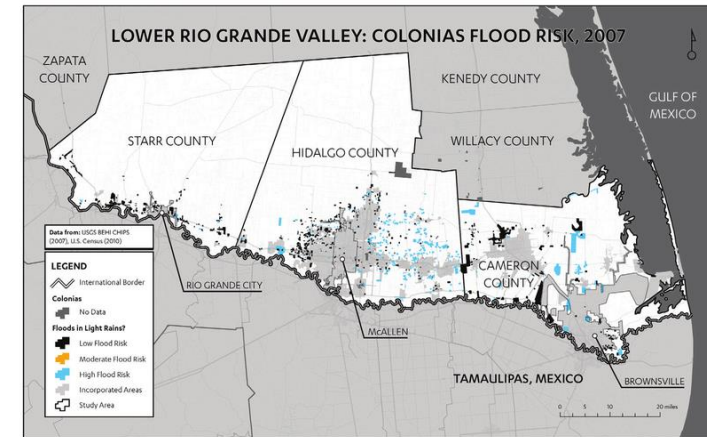


# Know Your Zone

- FEMA flood maps: <https://msc.fema.gov>
- Know if you're in a mandatory evacuation zone
- RGV counties publish zone info annually

## Evacuation Routes

- I-69E/I-69C North
- SH 100 from SPI
- SH 186 from Port Mansfield
- Plan two routes in case one is blocked



# Family Communication Plan

- Designate emergency contacts
- Choose meeting points
- Texting works better than calling



# Sign Up for Alerts

- Ready South Texas App
- NWS Weather Alerts
- Local Emergency Management social media





# Evacuation Drill Tips

- Practice with your whole family
- Don't forget pets
- Include elderly or disabled household members



# Community Preparedness

- Talk to neighbors
- Coordinate plans for vulnerable residents
- Join local emergency preparedness events

## Community Events

- CERT (Community Emergency Response Team)
- School-based safety initiatives
- Public Health outreach





# Role of Local Health Departments

- Shelter medical support
- Emergency surveillance and triage
- Vaccine and medication distribution



# Faith-Based & Non-Profit Support

- Distribution of supplies
- Shelter operations
- Mental health counseling



# After the Storm – Safety First

- Avoid floodwaters
- Watch out for live wires
- Document damage with photos
- Boil water advisories
- Mosquito-borne illness precautions
- Mental health care resources



# Report & Recover

- Contact insurance providers
- File with FEMA ([www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov))
- Seek local recovery assistance centers

# Update Your Plan

- Reflect on what worked
- Replenish supplies
- Share lessons with your community

# Mission of Operation Border Health

- Increase access to medical, dental, and vision services
- Target underserved communities
- Build resilience through preparedness education
- Locations in Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, Webb, and Willacy
- Services: Screenings, Immunizations, Education, Preparedness Kits





# OBH 2025

## Youth & Volunteer Engagement

- Public health students, medical volunteers
- Helps simulate emergency response conditions
- Trains future health professionals

## Collaborating Agencies

- Texas DSHS
- Local Health Department & Emergency Management
- Texas State Guard
- Red Cross & NGO partners





# Takeaways

- Hurricane preparedness is a shared responsibility
- Act early, not at landfall
- Leverage programs like Operation Border Health

# Resources

- Ready.gov/hurricanes
- Texas Division of Emergency Management
- Local County Emergency Offices
- [DSHS' Operation Border Health Website Page](#)

# Thank you! Questions?

Hurricane Season Preparedness in the Rio Grande Valley

Abdul Kamara, PHEP Manager, Public Health Region 11,  
[abdul.kamara@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:abdul.kamara@dshs.texas.gov)



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

Texas Department of State  
Health Services