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# Hurricane Ida Leaves Crisis Management Lessons Behind As Recovery Begins



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NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA - AUGUST 30: Big Chief Darryl Montana stands holding a brick from a collapsed ... [+]

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No sooner had Hurricane Ida [started to weaken](#) than the crisis management lessons from the deadly and devastating crisis began to emerge—as did the hurdles companies and organizations will face as they try to recover from this natural disaster.

In a [briefing with reporters](#) on Monday, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said, “This was an extremely large and powerful hurricane. And as expected, early reports suggest catastrophic damage in a number of areas along the Gulf Coast. And while Ida has now been downgraded to a tropical storm, it is going to continue to inflict damage as it moves across the state of Mississippi today and into the Tennessee Valley tomorrow.

“This will be a lengthy, whole-of-government, and whole-of-community response and recovery effort, and we are closely coordinating with state and local officials at every step of the way,” she said.

## **Intense Challenges**

Steve Powell, executive vice president of specialty operations at [Sedgwick](#), a claims management company, said the challenges are intense. “Between macroeconomic factors impacting availability of skilled labor, material shortages like [polyiso insulation](#) boards for commercial roofing that are in short supply, to compromised electric power, cellular and sewer systems immediately after the storm—the challenges in recovering from Hurricane Ida are real.

“Doing this all while navigating another significant rise in Covid-19 cases in the affected states is complex. This will set-up for [a] longer than usual time for repairs with higher supplement workloads. This will also affect the claims

process along with higher than usual business interruption claims,” he predicted.

[Paige Janson](#), the chief operating officer of Engie Impact, said that, “Beyond the impact that devastating weather events have on the environment and human lives, their aftershocks cause a ripple effect on businesses. Business leaders who are not prioritizing climate risk management and scenario analysis as a core business strategy are leaving themselves vulnerable to the inevitable impacts of extreme climate events.”

### **‘Duty Of Care’**

Dale Buckner is CEO of [Global Guardian](#) and a retired U.S. Army colonel. The company said it is working with seven corporate clients in the region that was impacted by the hurricane to protect and rescue employees from Ida; they have evacuated up to 600 people at a time from some hotels.

According to Buckner, “In disasters like this, employers have a ‘duty of care’ to their employees, meaning that they should take all steps within reason to promote the health, safety and wellbeing of their employees.

“Emergency response in a situation like this means companies need to make sure people are safe, first and foremost. Ideally, companies would be able to help employees evacuate before the storm, but when responding after the fact, companies need to help employees evacuate to a safe location...”. Buckner counseled.

## **Have A Plan In Place**

**Don Silver**, chief operating officer and co-lead of the crisis management department at **BoardroomPR**, noted that, “Being located in South Florida, we have a lot of experience working with clients and our own firm as well before and after storm events occur.

“[The] number one recommendation for companies in hurricane-prone areas, is to have a crisis plan in place, one that deals with typical operational risks, and the other to communicate with the company's various stakeholders and audiences,” he advised.

## **Key Questions**

“How is the company going to continue operating when the power goes out? Is there backup power? Can employees reach the office, or do you have a remote backup plan for them? Would it be a good idea to have critical employees spend the night (assuming it is safe) at the office? Is your IT infrastructure co-located in a high and safe area(s)? Do you have backup telecom and Internet options? How about warehouses in safe areas?” Silver asked.

## **Communication**

“In terms of communications, companies might break down their stakeholders into these categories:

**employees and executive team, employee families, customers, independent sales agents, shareholders, logistics, IT, etc.”**

**“We recommend keeping everyone up to date on all of the company's [communication] platforms including website[s], blog[s], social media, e-blasts and via phone pools and potentially, carpools to safely get employees back into the office. This process should begin pre-storm and immediately afterward. Traditional broadcast, online and print media can also be invaluable,” Silver said.**