This document has been updated by the USCC Young Professionals, with thanks to Mary Stucklen from the YP Webinars and Education sub-committee for her contributions.

This resource is designed to prepare and assist USCC members for a hurricane and/or significant storm event. In addition, these strategies can be used to minimize your losses in the case of other types of emergencies.

This page consists of useful resources for pre- and post-weather-related emergencies. One of the primary forms of emergency preparedness is planning. The USCC cannot develop a plan specific to every member’s business, yet any plan that is implemented is better than no plan.

Most states require each facility to have an Emergency Management Plan (EMP), so check locally to determine if you need a more specific plan for your business. It is recommended that in instances where an EMP is required, businesses hold a staff meeting and hand out a copy of this document along with the EMP. Businesses can review this document and assign various tasks to staff members to streamline implementation. This document is designed as a general overview of best EMP practices and to provide helpful information and resources for members to develop an EMP that fits their business.

Preparedness is key for preventing undesirable outcomes in emergencies. The segments below should be regarded as the backbone of an Emergency Management Plan (EMP).
Facility Infrastructure:

Make sure the facility infrastructure is maintained and in good standing.

- Clear ditches free of weeds and debris so maximum drainage can occur.
- Be sure that interior roads are in good repair to allow access to all areas.
- Check levels on all stormwater ponds and process water collection systems.
- Evaluate the need to drain these systems and haul away any material and debris.
- Make sure all buildings are in good repair.

If there are multiple buildings, consider assigning staff to each building. Make sure all windows, doors, siding, and roofing are secured as per your local building codes. The wind can rip off loose building materials, such as but not limited to paneling and roof tiles.

For portable sheds and trailers, tie them down securely. Evaluate whether you should remove loose-covered structures before a storm or if they should be dismantled and stored. This will minimize any coverings to become airborne during the storm event.

Before a storm, inventory whether you have sufficient materials to minimally repair facilities. If sufficient materials are not readily available, explore acquiring additional and spare materials, including building materials, if a repair is necessary.

Facility Utilities:

It is imperative that any business plans for power supply disruption. Power lines may be disabled for days or weeks, thus jeopardizing your systems. Develop a plan for temporary backup power. Also, consider arranging for rental of a portable generator with a light tower. This is extremely important if you manage a system that relies on power to remain operational.
**Facility Equipment:**

Ensure all equipment is serviced and adequate supplies are on hand. If possible, top off equipment fuel tanks and on-site fuel storage tank. Normal deliveries of supplies may be disrupted in the days and weeks following a hurricane or other significant event. Evaluate all your business’s specific and potential needs to ensure that fuel and other required supplies are available for use.

**Compost Pile:**

Install mulch, compost berms, or compost socks surrounding the compost production, curing, and finished product areas. Process all incoming putrescible feedstocks by mixing with carbon feedstocks and move into piles or windrows. This will not only help prevent fines of runoff from stormwater, but also ensure that your facility maintains a healthy operation.

**Other Considerations:**

- Move mobile equipment to higher ground or away from the path of the storm.
- Pile mulch in a trapezoidal shape and create a flat top surface and ramp to park mobile equipment on.
- Lower and secure conveyors before a storm or emergency event.
- Inventory your product(s) and equipment.

The inventory will help in the event you need to file a claim or to determine the damage you experienced. Also, this will help when recovering lost items. Consolidate the serial numbers on your equipment, including but not limited to conveyors, loaders, and grinders.
Immediately Before the Storm

**Equipment:**

Secure all loose items with tie-downs and weight. Loose items can and will become missiles during a storm event. Additionally, secure all equipment in an area not likely to be damaged by the event.

**Communication:**

- Emergency numbers should be made available to all staff. Make sure you have the numbers of your local police, fire, insurance company, state agencies, and other relevant emergency contacts.
- Suspend all deliveries of incoming feedstocks
- Notify customers that the storm may impact operations and that you will be in touch following the storm to provide updates.

*Establish a means of communicating with your employees:* Your employees will need to know what you expect of them after the storm.

Potential conversations include:

- Do you want them to come to work?
- Should they call the lead manager?
- Will staff members be able to remain on site or check in with their families?

Communications, such as internet access and cellular access, may be disrupted for days after an emergency event. Make a plan and share it with staff members before a storm strikes. Allow time for your employees to secure their homes before a storm, without the expectation that they will have the ability to secure business assets. Establishing a group text messaging feed on your mobile phone is one example of an emergency-preparedness strategy for communication. Other ideas include but are not limited to: social media updates, updates on the website, and signage outside the facility/business.
Allow plenty of time for your team to prepare for an emergency: Liberally allocate time to prepare; do not risk leaving tasks unfinished or only partially complete.

**Documentation:**

Print this document and details from the Important References and Build a Kit sections below for post-storm preparedness. Electricity may not be available, so be ready. Take photographs of any equipment and buildings for reference.

**Facility Infrastructure:**

Secure your structures and buildings. If there are multiple buildings, assign staff to comb through each building for leaks, damage, or changes. Make necessary repairs to your structures to secure them from the weather and intrusion.

**Communications:**

- Notify the proper authorities in the event of storm damage.
- Notify the local police or sheriff’s department of any road obstructions or hazardous situations.
- Notify your electric company of any power outages so they can get your request in their repair queue.
- Report water, sewer, or gas line breaches to the appropriate authority.

**When in doubt,** call the police or sheriff’s department to identify potential needs for reporting.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: DO NOT approach downed power lines!**

Call your power company and report downed lines or loss of power.
When necessary, notify disaster assistance agencies of your needs. If you have crop insurance, you may qualify for disaster assistance or low-cost loans. Contact the appropriate agency as soon as possible for instructions on how to proceed.

Notify your customers of your situation. As quickly as possible, let your customers know how well you survived the storm and when you anticipate servicing their accounts, if applicable.

Take photos of all damage immediately after the event and BEFORE the start of cleanup. Photos should include but are not limited to, photos of buildings, compost operations, crops, facility infrastructure, small and large damages, and obstructions that prevent the operation of the business. Many of these photos will be important for insurance purposes. Contact your insurance company with any information regarding potential or definite claims.

Inspect your property closely and pay attention to downed power lines, broken water lines, etc. A small leak in one building, over time, will result in a significant issue over time.

Information About Hurricanes

Hurricanes are large, powerful, and fickle storm systems that rotate in a counterclockwise direction. Storm influences are often the most severe on the northeast side of the storm. Hurricanes have feeder bands of rain storms that sweep through the area. In the center of all hurricanes is an area of still, sunny weather, called the ‘eye’. This is most often referred to as the ‘eye of the storm.’

The calmness of the ‘eye’ can be misleading. Wind forces of 80+ miles an hour are likely to be sustained for hours in some storm events. There is often unseasonably dry weather before and especially after hurricanes. Predictions of more than a day from a potential event are subject to dramatic changes. Stay tuned to reliable weather sources for progress reports, and be sure to prepare early.

The storm preparation tips provided above should be considered a foundation for dealing with a hurricane or other emergency event. Make decisions and take appropriate actions that are specific to your facility/business based on your geography, equipment, and environmental context. DO NOT take a hurricane lightly, as these storms can and will kill and destroy both lives and businesses.
Important References

- National Hurricane Center
- Federal Disaster Assistance Programs
- Center for Disease Control
- Hurricane Preparedness
- Farmer Preparedness
- Preparing a Landscape for Hurricanes

Build A Kit

Your emergency kit should be stocked with the items on the checklist linked below. Most of the items are inexpensive and easy to find, and any one of them could save your life. Headed to the store? Download a printable version to take with you. Once you look at the basic items, consider your family and facility's unique needs, such as supplies for pets, seniors, disabled persons, and more.

After an emergency, you may need to survive on your own for several days. Being prepared means having your individual and family’s food, water, and other supplies last for at least 72 hours. A disaster supplies kit is a collection of basic items your household may need in the event of an emergency.

Final Note

Review this document, attached web links, and other information provided, and print out details you may need following a storm. Edit and add onto these basic tips to ensure your success in weathering an upcoming hurricane or emergency event.

The US Composting Council and Young Professionals Group wish you the best of luck in handling and managing both emergency and standard storm events.