

Hurricane Plan Checklist

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"Lessons Learned from Katrina"

Below are some of my notes from a program that I taught for the PGA in the aftermath of Katrina. The suggestions below might help you prepare and deal with the impact of a Hurricane.

Ahead of the Hurricane be proactive...

Management & Accounting

- **Your Staff:** Create an updated phone list of all employees, emergency numbers & cell numbers. Establish a return to work schedule. Distribute copies of these phone numbers to all staff. Texting may be the best way to communicate if the cell towers receive overwhelming call volume.
- **Have Cash:** Make deposits, back up all records (several copies distributed to different staff members). Consolidate all POS money and create a petty cash fund. Minimum of \$3000.00. Invest in a fire safe.
- **Supplies:** Orders & delivery need to take place well in advance of the storm (provided club is not in a storm surge area) 10 cases of water, 10 cases of Gatorade, 10-15 cases of beer, & extra liquor. All of these supplies have high value during power shortages and initial cleanup. YOU WILL BE ABLE to accomplish great things and enlist the talents of many if you are well stocked with these items. They become "gold" in the initial days after a hurricane.
- **Take before photos:** Take non-digital photos of before conditions of the course, clubhouse, and all other fixtures. Enlist many to do this so you will get extra copies and many points of view. Get photos of safety meetings with staff and those who will help. Do this on many occasions. Have someone continue to check that everyone is working safe. Document this.
- **Charge your Cell and limit use during the storm:** Katrina has taught the phone companies about generators at towers and this will be a great deal easier. Have your insurance company provide you with an out of state office which will collect faxes and information from the "out of town" quick clean up artist. You will need heavy equipment but take your time and check the individuals out. Many of the employees which will work for these individuals are not very skilled at operating the equipment and this can be risky.
- **Your Insurance:** Make copies of all of the Clubs insurance papers; call and confirm name of your regional adjuster or contact. Get email, fax & cell numbers. Make certain that your equipment list is current. Make copies and store off site.
- **Beginning Inventory:** Do a complete inventory of F&B and of the golf shop. Make copies of inventory sheets and store off site.
- **Personal Supplies for staff:** Create a medicine inventory—common over-the-counter items which will be hard to find. Store this in the clubhouse. Sun screen, bug spray band aids, aspirins all of the common item will be needed during the clean up phase of a major storm.

- **Take inventory and secure clubs resources:** Have on hand pump, extra hydraulic fluid, hoses, extra extension cords, power surge protectors, work gloves, hard hats, safety glasses, sunscreen, hand tools, tire repair kits, rain jackets, walkie talkies (radio shack has small inexpensive which work on AA batteries) saw chaps, wheel barrel, trash bags, tie down straps, files, chainsaw, plywood, screws, tarp and especially gas cans, funnels & siphon pumps. **Remember that all Generators must be started and run for several minutes before you plug in anything. Not doing this will result in burning up the compressors.**

Golf Staff & Grounds Crew

- **Apply chemicals:** Fungicides, primo application for greens, tees, & fairways. Mow everything possible. Apply wetting agent.
- **Water Greens:** If your course is on northeast path of the storm, you may receive more damage and a more likelihood for power outages. If you lose power, the pumps will be down for several days.
- **Equipment:** Service everything; raise the height on your mowers in advance of the storm. Service your work carts, tractors, service oil and filled with fuel. Attach with blower, plan ahead and lease a bobcat, large front end loader or a back hoe. If you have flat bed trailers consider building plywood sides so that you can pile limbs and pinecones as you clean up. Purchase a large number of disposal work gloves, safety glasses. Check on how rental equipment applies to your insurance policy or purchase the additional insurance from the rental company. Secure your equipment early when possible. If you have local rental companies develop a working relationship with them and make arrangements to deliver in advance your equipment.
- **Shut down the Course:** If a large storm is coming in your direction, close the course earlier rather than later. Let your staff prepare at their homes too. Bring in all flags, tees, coolers, signs, trash cans. Take down scoreboards or other items which will likely be blown down. Remove and store all patio fixtures.
- **Consider pre-cutting of select Trees:** Cut down trees around key areas—around the clubhouse, entrance road, pump house, cart storage area—any building that would be affected. There are some special tax consideration regarding trees and clean up. Hire a very good tax adviser and create the information which can be carried over on the tax return over several years.
- **Parts & Supplies:** Inventory your parts and update your equipment list. Order and have on hand extra belts for blowers, chains for chain saws, hand tools. Make certain that all of the back pack blowers, all equipment with small engines are serviced and fueled. Have extra oil for mixed fuel on hand. Purchase several extra 5 gallon fuel cans and keep filled but in a locked and secure area. At the end of each day do an inventory of fuel cans and chain saws.
- **Fuel:** This is like gold during the storm. You cannot have too many fuel containers. Prior to the storm fill all equipment, carts & containers. Have your storage tanks refilled prior to the storm. Tip: Your filled 5 gallon gas cans need to be clearly marked as *Gas, Diesel, or Mixed*. Place under lock and key. You will need a manual gas pump, and this also needs to be under lock and key. Power will be out for several days so you will need a hand pump or safe way to connect a generator to the electric gas pump.

Kitchen: Fill all coolers with ice. Use large trash bags and fill 1/3 of the way with ice and store in the freezer. Fill pans, zip lock bags or other containers with water & freeze. Clean out kitchen

refrigerator. Prepare select items like tuna, pre-cooked burgers, or cookies. Purchase charcoal and lighter and cook outside. Gas in kitchen will work but will create a smoky mess in the clubhouse if the power has not yet been restored.

Security: If you feel security will be a concern, then install 4 x 4 poles with chain and lock at the club's entrance. See if you can allow the clubhouse to be used to house a volunteer emergency response company. They will be a great asset but make sure you have an exit plan. Secure all fuel tanks and oil. Security is a concern just before and right after a storm. You will need someone to keep an eye on gas, blowers and even tractors.

Ahead of the Hurricane be proactive... ***But after the storm take action in a positive manner...***

After the Storm: If your golf course has received damage, here are steps to consider.

- **Setting up your "new" accounting office after the Hurricane:** A course which receives hurricane damage will be quickly approached by a great number of "outsiders", those with bobcats and chain saws. Quickly establish a procedure for collecting the names, phone numbers, driver licenses and most importantly the insurance certification, Tax ID numbers, social security cards. Make certain that any outside vendor whom you employee provides you with a copy of the workmen's comp paper work. ***NEVER allow them to say I will mail it to you... you will never see this and it will be very costly when you go through your insurance audit...and you will!!!*** Skip this step and you will pay costly fines and face hour of frustrations chasing down paper work. There are so many fly by night companies working storms.
- **Close until safe:** Keep the course closed until a full and complete assessment of damages can be made. Inspect bridges, overhanging trees and downed trees. Take video and photos (digital & non-digital). Have more than one person taking photos and get control of the copies.
- **Limited operation:** Limit what area of the building you need to re-open and secure and close the rest of the building. You will likely use some personal from the Kitchen, cart staff and bar area to pick up pine cones, sticks off the greens and closely mown areas.
- **Limited course access:** After damage assessment has been completed, create a re-opening plan. This can be just 6, 9 or even a loop around the clubhouse. Open the range first, and then clean up around the clubhouse and the holes visible to the public. Create a positive buzz about your cleanup effort. Realize that the clean up is a big deal and will take time.
- **Take care of your staffs needs:** Go at it hard in the mornings and then have a late staff lunch, use the afternoon to review the day and prepare for the next morning. Get everyone off the clock and heading home by 2:00 PM. At the end of the day, pass out cash, gas and food to your staff. Make certain that any special needs are taken care of. Labor retention will be a big problem when you have such devastation and the government handout start. Typically the club will have beer and liquor on hand, secure and control the inventory but

also realize this hard to find commodity and being generous with distribution to your "Clean up crew" will win you loyalty.

- **Establish routines:** The employee should have a place to sign in and out for work. We simply taped white copy paper on the large window in our dining area. We also had a "personal request" sheet of paper for employees and family needs. While they were busy helping clean up, older members of my staff who could not work were busy waiting in lines around town or picking up hard to find items at stores. Some just wanted ice to take home, some needed medication and other needed food for friends. We took care of reasonable request of our staff and in most cases no cost to them. I did not a single staff member "no show" to work during Katrina and we were a stronger more bonded team when returned to business as normal!
- **Start early:** At day break get to work, have someone on your staff prepare some type of fast breakfast to go with the employee. Have beverage cart with snacks running around the course during clean up, Make a late lunch the big meal, Try not to serve until 1:00 PM. During lunch discuss with everyone what needs to be completed today; what works best for the next day. Clean, fuel and sharpen equipment for the next day. Lock up all fuel cans and other items and get everyone out of there by 2:00PM. They have responsibilities at home and you will need them for the long haul not the short term. Avoid burning them and your self out in the first week of recovery.
- **Contract out:** When it comes to the talent of your staff, make an honest evaluation as to what they can and cannot do. If you do not have someone who is comfortable with a chain saw, then this is not the time for on the job training. When you contract a job, send someone with that person to protect turf and maximize the production of the contracted services. A skilled bobcat operator is invaluable when it comes to removing cut trees but an unskilled operator will causes you more damage and expense that you might think. Keep everyone working in the same general area don't make the mistake of getting too stretch out and then at the end of the day you fail to have that sense of accomplishment. Set daily goal and celebrate them. This make the journey
- **After the storm...where to start?** Clear club access points club driveway and areas to pump, cart storage area, and any other buildings. Next create access for heavy equipment by clearing the cart paths & bridges. Then it becomes time to clean short grass areas (greens & Tees) Start with the blowing greens & tees on the entire course regardless of which holes you plan to reopen. This is critical to the recovery process. The greens need to be watered & mowed on a regular basis. Consider taking the height up, this will delay need for initial mowing after the storm. The biggest task of storm clean up is the picking up of green pine cones, small branches and limbs which have been displaced around the course. You will likely have to hand picked small braches and green pinecones in and around the fairway. **The mower heights should be raised (ahead of the storms arrival while your mechanic has power tools and a lift to work with).** The quickest and most effective way to clear fairways from debris is to blow to one side and have several workers hand pick behind what is not easily blown. The Rough & Bunkers are the last areas for clean up but generally fare much better during the recover process.
- **Establish areas to pile up cut trees and branches:** In most situations the club will be responsible for disposing of storm debris. The size of this pile will overwhelm you so select areas out of play with easy assess for large trucks and heavy loading equipments. When moving heavy cut trees to another part of the course, always keep equipment in the rough, the rough is the easiest turf on the course to restore after a storm. Depending on the magnitude of the storm, the pile might be with you a full season so select wisely and plan

ahead for removal at a later time. A place that is safe for everyone. You will return to golfing sooner than you think so select locations that do not prevent you selling golf.

- **Watch out Mr. Gene only cares about his yard:** If your course shares boundaries with a residential community then you had better protect your turf. The homeowners will have sub-contactors on their property very quickly after the storm. They will be attempting to remove fallen trees in a manner that does not tear up "their" yards. You know what that means... these out of town contractors with heavy equipment will be tearing up your course. I had a volunteer riding the course every day looking and observing what the residents were doing regarding clean up. He stopped residents from pulling out downed trees and piling them on the golf course. He also identified the sub contractor who was dragging trees across the fairway with a tractor without turf friendly tires and the homeowner who told him that was ok with the club.

Greatly reduce your hours of operation: Make them play when you want them to. There is less ringing of the cash drawer following the storm than you expect. Members and guest will come out to visit (waste your time and energy) but they will not be spending money. Example: Open the course for play **after 12:00 PM** Wednesday through Sunday. This would allow cleanup in the mornings without distractions from members and is safer for all involved. Close Monday & Tuesday allow outside contractor to use big equipment and keeps the course void of the curious.

In closing, consider that the events will create many new opportunities. You can make many changes at the club and board level to improve and even make your golf operation more efficient. Consider the hours that your business needs to operate. Get your staff cross trained and working as a team on day one. If business is going to be slow set your opening schedule to generate revenue not entertain members who are bored and have completed cleaning up their small yards.

***Hope some of our experiences help fellow professionals,
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