

# Disaster Recovery Resources for Firms & Companies

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Although there is no road-map for recovery from Hurricane Harvey, P&N has experience responding to and supporting employees, clients, and communities in the wake of natural disasters. In August of 2016, P&N had more than 30 employees in South Louisiana who were directly impacted by the Great Flood of 2016, in addition to thousands of clients and friends of our firm.

During that historic flood and other recent natural disasters, P&N used many different tools to assess and respond to the needs of our employees and our clients. These resources are not exhaustive, but we have compiled them into a guidebook in hopes that they may provide you with ideas to help your firm and your community recover, as well as potentially reduce some of the time it takes to organize a response of this magnitude.

This guide is divided into three sections:

1. **Operational Tools**
2. **Employee Assistance Options**
3. **Client Resources**

If you have any questions about the information in this guide, or need any assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out to P&N. Our thoughts and prayers are with all who have been impacted.

*This guide is intended to be a resource for professional services firms and other businesses to determine their own response plans. It is not intended to be professional advice. Please seek professional advice as you consider the tax and legal implications of implementing the ideas included in this guide.*

## OPERATIONAL TOOLS

*The following section provides options and ideas for organizations to gain information from and distribute information to employees in the wake of a disaster.*

### Storm Relief Survey

In order to immediately understand how to help employees, consider sending a survey to all employees to gauge needs. This can allow you to deploy financial and other resources quickly. A sample survey is included below. If you do not have the resources to create, deploy and track a survey of this nature, contact P&N for assistance.

#### Survey Questions

You and your family are in our thoughts and prayers. Please help us understand your current needs and how we can assist you.

1. Name
2. Department
3. County of Residence
4. Did your residence flood? (Y/N)
5. If you evacuated, where are you currently residing? (Select one)
  - Family
  - Friends
  - Hotel
  - Shelter
  - Other
6. How many people are in your household?
7. Did you lose a vehicle?

8. How can your coworkers help you? (Check all that apply)
- Food/meals
  - Clothing
  - Toiletries
  - Household items/cleaning supplies
  - Clean up assistance/manual labor
  - Childcare assistance/babysitting
  - A place to stay
  - Laundry
  - Equipment (shovels, power washers, generators, etc.)
  - Other

### Internal Communications

How and what to communicate to employees can be complicated by technology and connectivity issues, lack of information on where employees are, and the fluidity of the situation. A strong but simple internal communications plan can help ensure employees stay connected.

#### Communication Mechanisms:

In addition to basic communication phone trees and emails, some additional communication mechanisms are listed below.

- If you do not have a text messaging system in place, we recommend **MessageMedia Business Messaging**. It allows for quick and easy communication with employees and also allows employees to respond to you.
- Also consider adding an emergency line (800 number) that employees can call and retrieve or leave messages.
- Facebook and Twitter are excellent ways to communicate with clients/customers and employees on the status of office closures and other high-level information.

#### Communication Types:

The purpose of this is to provide some types of information employees may need to receive from their employer. If you would like examples of any of these communications, please contact P&N.

- Updates from CEO/Managing Partner on safety of employees and ways the company is immediately helping
- Updates from CEO/Managing Partner on ways employees can help
- Time Entry for Weather Conditions (i.e., where to code your time)
- Information on the organization's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), if applicable, for people dealing with the psychological and/or familial effects of the storm
- Professional resources and disaster updates to inform employees about ways to help clients/customers who were impacted

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE OPTIONS

*The following section provides ideas to assist impacted employees in their recovery, as well as to coordinate the efforts of other employees volunteering to assist.*

### Employee Emergency Communication and Assistance

Impacted employees will likely need immediate financial assistance for expenses such as hotels, cleaning supplies, storage solutions, etc. Companies may consider providing a Disaster Relief Payment for short-term incidental expenses. If you choose to do this, you will need to consider the proper channels for distributing emergency funds so they are not taxable for employees. If you need assistance with this, please let us know. A sample communication is included below.

As you continue the road to recovery from the recent flooding and the impact to your home and to your family, the firm would like to provide you with some financial assistance. We realize this does not even begin to scratch the surface of your financial needs, but we hope it may assist with incidental expenses in the short-term.

The firm would like to offer you **\$X** to support your flood recovery efforts.

Attached is a disaster relief form that needs to be completed, signed and returned to me before this payment can be processed. If you are out of the office or do not have access to a printer, please stop by the office at your earliest convenience. If you cannot make it into the office, please contact me so we can make arrangements. The firm will be depositing these funds directly to your bank account. Once the form is returned, you should see the funds in your account within 72 business hours.

We also realize the emotional aspect of this disaster can be overwhelming. We want to remind you that P&N offers counseling including legal consultations through the Employee Assistance Program. P&N pays 100% and the program is confidential. Our EAP is available to employees, spouses and children. If you need assistance, please call 1-800-448-4470 or visit [www.healthassociatesllc.com](http://www.healthassociatesllc.com).

The firm is currently working on a number of other ways to help you and other team members impacted. Once again, our hearts go out to you and your family. Please let us know if there is anything specifically we can do to further assist you in your recovery efforts.

### Coordinate Efforts

In addition to immediate financial support, one of the best ways to support storm victims is to provide a mechanism for employees to help their impacted co-workers. Employees want to help, but they often don't know the best way to contribute outside of writing a check. Companies might consider coordinating efforts in the following areas:

1. Establishing an Emergency Assistance Fund
2. Coordinating volunteers to demo and clean destroyed/flooded homes
3. Providing meals and household items for impacted employees
4. Organizing a way for storm-affected employees to seek advice and information from each other
5. Continuing to support storm victims as the holidays approach

### Employee Assistance Fund

As an example, P&N created an Employee Disaster Assistance Fund to assist employees whose homes, personal property, and/or vehicles were damaged or destroyed in the storm. The fund collected more than \$130,000, which went directly to P&N employees. Communications were sent internally within our firm, to the international association of which we are a member, and directly to organizations who inquired about how to help. We did not publicize it to the general community due to the extreme needs being faced by the entire community.

A sample communication is below. If you would like the decision criteria for distributing grants or other information on setting up an employee fund, please contact P&N.

### Employee Assistance Fund Sample Communication

#### **P&N Launches Employee Assistance Fund**

Postlethwaite & Netterville had many employees who were impacted by the recent historic flood in South Louisiana, including those who lost homes, personal property and vehicles. P&N has launched an Employee Assistance Fund to assist team members most in need due to the flood. The fund, which will be administered through the Vision 21 Foundation, will directly benefit P&N team members. 100% of your tax-deductible donations will go to P&N employees, distributed through a grant application process based on available funds and needs.

Donations by anyone wishing to contribute are gratefully accepted through one of the following mediums.

#### **Online**

<http://www.thevision21foundation.org/donate/>  
Select **P&N Flood Relief** in the Donation drop-down

#### **Via Check**

The Vision 21 Foundation  
Attn: P&N Employee Assistance Fund

*Please include a reference to **P&N Employee Assistance Fund** in your correspondence.*

Please feel free to forward this information to anyone seeking to help P&N team members during this time of need.

Thank you again for your willingness to support the P&N family and our entire community!

### Clean-Up Crews

Companies might consider pairing employees who need help demolishing and cleaning up their homes with employees and others who want to help. To do this, send an email to all employees asking who wants to volunteer, put them in teams based on locations, coordinate shifts with the affected employees, and deploy the teams on a set schedule.

### Employee Meals and Household Items

To provide basic household items, food, and toiletries, companies can survey employee volunteers to determine who wants to assist, and then make assignments for donations or purchases. Donors and recipients should be kept anonymous to each other, as a measure of respect and privacy.

#### Process:

1. Ask each family what their immediate grocery and household needs are, including food allergy information, special items for infants, pets, and the families' needs for clothing, bedding, towels, etc. Assign volunteers to fulfill the lists.
2. Create a list of pantry basics and other household necessities (see below), and assign volunteers to fulfill them for each family. To streamline, you can assign one person to bring all of an individual item for all affected families, instead of having individuals shop for all items for a single family (i.e., one person brings 10 bottles of shampoo or 10 loaves of bread).
3. As the emergency subsides and people start to rebuild, consider providing one hot dinner each week for several weeks through a meal delivery service. Employee volunteers have the opportunity to pay for the meals for each family.

#### Pantry Starter Set:

- Can opener
- Vegetable peeler
- Large jar of peanut butter (creamy)
- 1 jar of grape jelly
- Loaf of sandwich bread
- 1 bottle of mustard
- 1 jar of mayonnaise
- 1 bottle of ketchup
- 1 bottle of hot sauce
- 24-32 ounces of vegetable oil
- 4-pound bag of granulated sugar
- Can of baking powder
- Box of baking soda
- Small bag of cornmeal
- 5-pound bag of all-purpose flour
- Box of table salt or pack with pre-filled salt/pepper shaker
- Can of black pepper
- 2 bags of dried beans: red, white (navy, cannellini, etc.)
- 2 bags of rice
- 2 pounds of spaghetti
- 2 boxes of pasta
- 2 large containers (jars or cans) of spaghetti sauce
- 6 cans chicken broth
- 6 canned tomatoes (crushed, diced)
- 5-pound bag of yellow or white onions
- 5-pound bag of russet potatoes

#### Toiletry Kit:

- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Bar soap or body wash
- 5 wash cloths
- Disposable razors
- Nail clippers
- Cotton swabs
- Toothbrush

### Survivors' Lunch

The after-effects of the storm are both extremely practical (filing paperwork, securing contractors, buying cleaning supplies) as well as extremely emotional. Several weeks after the storm, you might consider inviting employees who suffered losses to lunch in your office. This allows them to connect with fellow survivors to discuss things they have found helpful as well as things they still need.

Attendees can be encouraged to discuss the following topics, although this should be optional in order to avoid causing undue stress:

- Top 2-3 things you have found most helpful or beneficial (resources, things you learned, tips from your insurance adjuster/FEMA, contractors, etc.)
- Top 2-3 things you are struggling with or finding challenging (others in the group may have suggestions)

### **Holiday Toy Drive**

The needs of storm-impacted individuals do not stop as the holidays approach, and with so many basic needs still unmet, holiday celebrations are not the most pressing. Companies can consider organizing a toy drive for impacted employees, in addition to any regular holiday charity involvement.

Employees who have children living at home (who have not yet graduated from high school), can be invited to participate by providing the following information:

- Child's first name (pseudonyms can be provided to the adopting team member in order to maintain confidentiality)
- Child's age
- Child's gender
- Child's clothing sizes
- Special wish (i.e., is there anything specific the child wishes for this year?)

## **CLIENT RESOURCES**

### **Client Communications**

It is important to let clients/customers know of any office closures and remind them that you are ready to assist them as they recover. To help clients with disaster recovery efforts, P&N provided clients with information and resources on topics such as employer sponsored disaster relief benefits, restoring technology, casualty losses and employee leave sharing. If you would like to share this information with clients, you may find updated resources at [www.pncpa.com/resources/flood-impact/](http://www.pncpa.com/resources/flood-impact/). We will continue to add information and resources to this page as they become available.

**If you would like more information on any of the information contained in this document, please contact:**

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