Hurricane Harvey Shutters AIDS Foundation Houston

Plus: How people with HIV can prepare for and survive a natural disaster

August 29, 2017

Hurricane/Tropical Storm Harvey has displaced tens of thousands of Texans and shuttered countless businesses, including AIDS Foundation Houston. According to the AFH website, the nonprofit service organization will tentatively reopen on Tuesday, September 5.

AFH serves over 200 people living with HIV and residing in six housing programs. Although the storm has damaged some of the housing, AFH's current clients are safe. Nevertheless, writes the group, "there are people living with HIV/AIDS who have been displaced from their homes and will need emergency shelter, food and other basic needs."

AFH is now accepting emergency donations for clients displaced by Harvey. The organization writes: "Please consider making a donation to AIDS Foundation Houston as we strive to provide safe housing, food pantry services, and other support services to people living with HIV/AIDS in Houston. Our biggest immediate needs are funds to make building repairs to our housing programs and to stock our food pantry."

Although the AHF site includes emergency resource information, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) website includes a page on disaster preparedness specifically for people taking HIV medications. It lists the steps to take before a disaster strikes (hint: keep a copy of your medical information and be sure your prescriptions are up to date) and what to do when instructed to evacuate. The Texas DSHS has also been tweeting directions for people who have lost their HIV medications during the storm:

If you lost your #HIV medication during #Harvey, the Texas HIV Medication Program can help. 1-800-255-1090 or https://t.co/8Id0SkdolV. pic.twitter.com/cKLmJCa8Kt

— Texas DSHS (@TexasDSHS) August 29, 2017

According to End HIV Houston, a collaborative effort of HIV leaders to fight the local epidemic, about 22,500 people are living with the virus in the Houston area (12th in the nation for new cases of HIV), and Texas has 4 million uninsured residents, the highest in the country.

In the wake of the hurricane, End HIV Houston is assisting people living with the virus. Visit the website or email publicaffairs@legacycommunityhealth.org for information on how you can help.

For more lessons on emergency preparedness, check out the firsthand tips from HIV-positive survivors of natural disasters in the POZ article "How to…Survive a Disaster."

HIV advocates have also been sharing related tips on social media:

For more general information about disaster relief, see the Texas Tribune article "How to Get (and Offer) Help After Hurricane Harvey." And LGBT newspaper The Washington Blade offers a rundown on LGBT-related relief funds to help storm victims, including the Trans Disaster Relief Fund.

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