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— Jack Ford, Zinsser



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[TURNAROUND MANAGEMENT KNOWLEDGE UPDATE]

By: DAVID FRINCO
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Hurricanes: Lessons in unpredictability

Clearly, Hurricane Ike was a reminder of both how strong and how fragile we are. While we strive to make our turnarounds and capital projects more predictable, we cannot control Mother Nature. Still, our skills in planning can help us all to be better prepared and to stay safe.

Listening is essential

No one knows it all. One motto we like a lot is, "Do what you do best and pay the best to do the rest." It's important to listen to the professionals in our business life and to listen to professionals when they tell us to get out of harm's way in our personal life.

People tend to half-listen to warnings and evacuation announcements. We simply do not follow them as we should. We often believe, because we remained safe in past hurricanes, we'll be safe this time. Happily, it seems that most Gulf Coast residents took officials' advice seriously and managed to stay safe. The loss of life was less than first expected.

The importance of planning

Planning and preparation are essential to turnaround success, and they are essential to personal success. During Ike nearly all of our Gulf Coast personnel had some kind of personal or property loss, but for many of us, the fact that we had a plan for our families and ourselves minimized greater danger and losses.

We preach that safety comes first job-wise and personally too. It is necessary to take natural threats seriously and to have a plan in place so that the location of family members, pets, medicines and important documents are accessible and that proper supplies are on hand. Refer to the National Hurricane Center Web site to develop a plan for your family and pets — www.nhc.noaa.gov/HAW2/english/disaster_prevention.shtml.

Apply lessons learned

In turnarounds we talk about learning from both past successes and failures. Applying the lessons learned from past turnarounds to current projects is simple and should be obvious but is often forgotten when the next turnaround comes along a few years later. It is very important to take lessons learned forward.

The emergency plan put in place at The Turnaround Management Company worked very well. Once Ike was declared an emergency threat, a core team moved critical operations to a secure location in Dallas and prepared the local office for potential damage. These members continued coordinating with customers and field employees, making sure people could reach key contacts. They also provided information about what to expect before, during and after the event. We heard that many folks were able to coordinate with

clients and get back to work quickly when it was safe and possible to do so. That's great news and our clients appreciated our professional dedication. Still we learned from this event. We will be updating our plan to make it more effective in the future. We will take the lessons-learned forward.

Patience is a virtue

During turnarounds it is important to be somewhat patient when surprises happen. So it goes after a natural disaster or event like Ike. Recovery is not instant; it takes time. Some of us had major damage while others simply had the inconvenience of losing power for a few days. Regardless of the situation, not everyone is recovering at the same pace and that goes for property, physical ability and mental state. Let's do our best to get back to normal, and help others along the way.

Recovery is not instant; it takes time.

Lend a hand

We also learned some refreshing things during and after Ike. There are thousands of stories of how strangers helped strangers, neighbors helped neighbors, and friends helped friends. It is important to note that those affected by Ike put out a hand to help out. They did not put out a hand for a handout. Personal responsibility, order, consideration and generosity were all on display.

My wife shared an e-mail the other day. It was something one of my favorite movie stars wrote and was later read at her funeral. I would like to share a portion of it with you. Audrey Hepburn wrote, "Remember, if you ever need a helping hand, you will find one at the end of each of your arms. As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands; one for helping yourself and another for helping others."

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