



# Hurricane Ike:

## Houston Fire Department Response Before, During and After

**K**atrina, Rita, Bonnie, Eduardo are just a few of the dangerous tropical weather systems that have threatened the Houston/Galveston area in recent years. Houston had been spared the wrath of these types of massive storms for years until 2008 when Ike made landfall in Galveston as a category two hurricane bringing torrential rains, catastrophic winds and an enormous storm surge from the Gulf of Mexico. Although eye landfall was in the early morning hours of September 13, the effects of the hurricane were felt throughout the entire day of September 12 due to its massive size.



Warnings and alerts were sent out days earlier and mandatory evacuations were in effect for Galveston and the surrounding coastal areas. Over a million Houston/Galveston residents heeded the warnings and evacuated while millions of others were told to remain and “hunker down” in their homes or designated shelters. The shelves in local grocery and hardware stores were cleaned out of water, ice, non-perishable foods, plywood and nails, batteries and other essential items. Gas lines were long as citizens filled their tanks in preparation for Ike. The traffic heading out of Galveston and Houston in all directions was heavy with evacuees leaving for safer ground.



In short, what could be done, in preparation by citizens, was done.

The Houston Fire Department, along with the other emergency service agencies, was also prepared for Hurricane Ike. Briefings and meetings were held around-the-clock to provide the latest information on storm related events and the dangerous conditions in the Houston area.

HFD Hurricane Ike Statistics	
<b>Week Pre-Ike</b>	
<b>Fire Events- 916</b>	<b>EMS Events- 5,507</b>
<b>Total Events- 6,423</b>	
<b>Week of Ike</b>	
<b>Fire Events- 8,199</b>	<b>EMS Events- 9,857</b>
<b>Total Events- 18,056</b>	

Although it is the stated policy of the Houston Fire Department not to take action in extreme storm conditions when the wind exceeds 50 mph, our firefighters and paramedics responded to many emergency events during the height of Hurricane Ike as it passed over the area.

At wind peaks of 50 to 70 mph, firefighters responded to significant events such as three major house fires, one major apartment fire and one major restaurant fire (which was being used as a shelter). From 12 a.m. to 5 a.m.

“I would like to thank our members for their recent efforts by preparing, responding and assisting with the aftermath for Hurricane Ike. Although our call volume more than tripled, our members both firefighters and civilians responded, as they always do, in the most professional manner serving the Houston Community with Courage, Commitment and Compassion.”



*Fire Chief Phil Boriskie*

on Saturday, September 13, when the hurricane was raging, HFD responded to 90 fire incidents and more than 100 EMS incidents.

Although, the number of EMS calls was comparable to most mornings, the percentage of fire calls were more than 10 times the norm.

Our call volume peaked at an increase of 196% above our average call volume during the storm weekend. We gradually went back down to our city’s average call volume although were still receiving slightly more calls than we usually do two weeks afterwards.

In the storm’s aftermath, citizen’s faced the challenges of assessing damages, cleaning up and restoring their lives. With over 95% of fire stations suffering storm damage, firefighters faced the same hardships on duty. Through it all however, the Houston Fire Department continued to respond to thousands of emergency calls with “Courage, Commitment and Compassion”.



# THE SKINNY ON Turkey Fryers

## Is the Taste Worth the Danger?

With the holiday season fast approaching, the Houston Fire Department would like to remind you of the dangers of cooking with turkey fryers. Turkey fryers can create a delicious holiday treat for your family and friends but without proper precautions, can become a dangerous and deadly disaster. Follow each of these recommended safety tips when using a turkey fryer so you can have a safe and tasty holiday season.

- Turkey fryers are **EXTREMELY DANGEROUS!**
- **ALWAYS** use turkey fryers outdoors away from anything that can burn.
- **ALWAYS** use the fryer outdoors on a level surface to avoid tipping
- **NEVER** use them on wooden decks or in garages
- **NEVER** leave the fryer unattended even for a second
- **NEVER** let children or pets near the fryer
- **The oil will remain dangerously hot hours after use**
- **NEVER** overfill a fryer
- The turkey must be **completely thawed before being placed in the hot oil**
- **Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher nearby** and use heavy duty pot holders.
- **NEVER** use water to extinguish the fire

### You Will Need

- In addition to a completely thawed turkey, you'll need a 40 or 60 quart pot with basket or turkey frying hardware, plus a propane gas tank and burner, a candy/deep fry thermometer, a meat thermometer and lots of oil. Use oils that have a high smoke point, such as corn, peanut or canola oils.
- As far as the turkey itself goes, smaller birds work better for frying. Try not to go over 15 pounds.

### Before You Fry-

#### These tips will help to prevent oil overflow

- Before beginning, (and before you even season or marinate your turkey) determine the amount of oil you'll need by placing the turkey in the basket (or on the hanger, depending on the type of fryer you are using) and putting it in the pot. Add water until it reaches about two inches above the turkey. Remove the turkey and note the water level by using a ruler to measure the distance from the top of the pot to the surface of the water. Remove the water and thoroughly dry the pot. Now add enough oil to equal what the water level was without the turkey in the pot.

**Remember:** There are many local grocery stores and other businesses that prepare fried turkeys so you don't have to. Always practice these and other safe cooking habits.



*Using a turkey fryer improperly can create a deadly disaster in no time.*



## morecookingsafetytips

**It is better to prevent a fire than to deal with one.**

**In The Kitchen- Careless cooking is the #1 cause of residential fires and unattended cooking is the primary cause of kitchen fires!**

- Turn pot handles away from the front of the stove and never position them over another burner
- Make sure pot holders are not too close to the stove
- **NEVER** leave cooking food unattended
- Wear short sleeves or tight-fitting long sleeves
- Shield yourself from scalding steam when lifting lids from hot pots
- Keep broilers, ovens, stove tops and exhaust ducts free from grease
- If there is a fire in the oven-Turn off the oven and keep the oven door closed
- Use an ABC fire extinguisher, baking soda or a tight-fitting pot lid, **NEVER** flour or water, to extinguish a kitchen fire

### Barbeque Pits- Keep The Fire In The Pit!

- When starting your barbeque use charcoal lighter fluid. **NEVER** Use Gasoline!
- Have a fire extinguisher or charged garden hose near while the fire is burning
- Use long handle barbeque tools when grilling outdoors
- Check the pit frequently
- Only use barbeque pits outdoors

- Soak the coals in water before disposing of them
- The Houston Fire codes prohibits the use of barbeque pits within 10 feet of roofs, combustible walls and other combustible materials. Fines start at \$250.00 for violations

### Gas Grills- Gas Grills Are NOT Foolproof!

- Check your gas connections and tank regularly. Use a light soap & water solution to check for leaks
- Make sure there are no clogged lines or burners
- **ALWAYS** have the grill open when starting the fire. The accumulation of gas can explode when exposed to flame
- If the fire does not ignite when you press the ignitor button, turn off the gas and let the remaining gas clear before restarting
- When you are finished cooking, turn off the gas at the tank and the controls
- **NEVER** store gas cylinders in your home or garage.
- **ALWAYS** store them outside.
- **ALWAYS** use gas grills outdoors

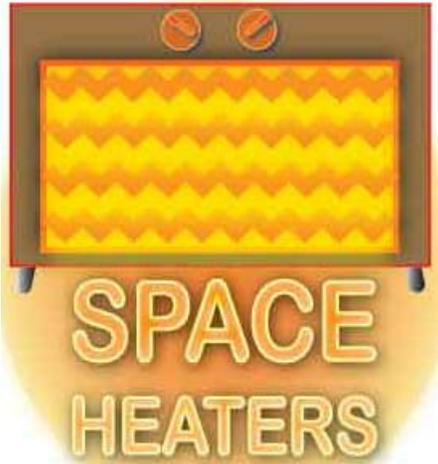


If you or your organization would like to receive our free Civic Safety Chain Newsletter and other e-mail updates, please visit our website:

[www.houstonfire.org](http://www.houstonfire.org)

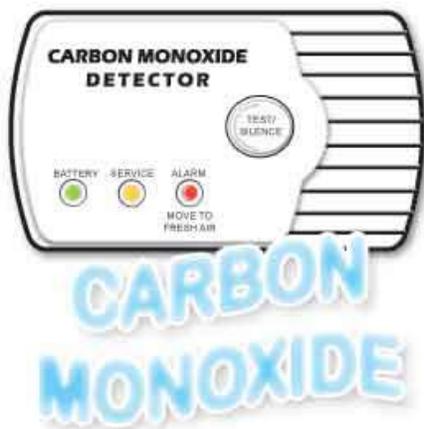
To register click on the Civic Safety Chain link.

As the weather get colder and the holidays get nearer, the Houston Fire Department would like to offer these safety tips to help keep you and your family safe and warm during the months ahead.



### SPACE HEATERS NEED SPACE!

- Keep them at least 3 feet away from combustibles- walls, sofas and anything else that will burn
- Space heaters should always be placed on the floor
- **NEVER** leave children alone in a room with a space heater and do not let children adjust the controls or move the heater
- Open-faced heaters should have a proper screen & grates in place-never operate a defective heater
- Provide adequate ventilation when using a gas space heater, opening a window slightly (one inch) to prevent carbon monoxide buildup
- **NEVER** overload outlets or breakers
- **NEVER** hide cords under rugs or carpets. Placing anything on top of the cord could cause it to overheat and can cause a fire
- **NEVER** use an extension cord with the heater. If the cord is hot to the touch, turn off the heater and unplug it!
- Electric heaters permanently installed in the wall or ceiling should have lint and dust removed regularly. Lint and dust will burn!
- Have your heating system professionally inspected and serviced every year
- Purchase a Carbon Monoxide detector if you use gas or a fireplace for your heating
- If you use a gas space heater, light the match before you turn on the gas. This avoids the risk of flashback caused by accumulating gas
- According to Houston Fire Department statistics, about 100 fires every year are blamed on faulty furnaces or space heaters



### THE HOUSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT WANTS YOU TO BE AWARE OF THE DANGERS OF CARBON MONOXIDE.

- Carbon Monoxide is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that can kill you before you are even aware it is in your house.
- CO causes side effects such as headaches, nausea, dizziness, disorientation and fatigue that are often mistaken for the flu. These effects can vary greatly from person to person depending on age, overall health and length of exposure.
- According to statistics, CO kills hundreds and injures thousands of people each year.
- CO is produced during the incomplete combustion of fuels such as kerosene, natural gas, oil, gasoline, coal & even wood.
- The gas may originate from your furnace, fireplace, stove, hot water heater, generators barbeque grill or automobile.
- The danger increases more during the winter months as heaters are used more frequently and fresh air ventilation is minimized by closed windows.
- Warming up automobiles in an attached garage, even with the garage door open, can allow concentrated amounts of CO to enter your house through nearby windows or carport door.
- When inhaled, carbon monoxide is absorbed into the bloodstream 200 times as fast as oxygen.
- Purchase a Carbon Monoxide detector if you use gas or a fireplace for your heating. Have your furnace professionally inspected every year and check for CO emissions.
- Install a Carbon Monoxide detector in the hallway near every separate sleeping area of the home.
- When your CO alarm sounds, ventilate the house with fresh air by opening windows and doors.
- Check your CO detector by every month pressing the test button and replace the detector every 5 years.



### Christmas Trees

- It is recommended that you purchase an artificial, fire-proof tree
- If you buy a real tree, make sure it is as fresh as possible, not brown, no needles falling etc.
- Put a fresh diagonal cut, about an inch off the bottom, so water will flow through. Place in a secure base and keep water or wet sand in the base or use products designed to keep trees fresh
- Make sure the tree is far enough away (at least 3 feet) from any heat source (candles, fireplace etc.)
- **NEVER** try to burn the tree yourself in the fireplace to dispose of the tree.
- Dispose of your tree as soon as the season is over. Store your tree away from your home and allow for pick up

### Lights

- Make sure they are UL listed
- **NEVER** use more than 3 strands on a run (follow manufacturers instructions).
- Make sure there is no frayed wiring
- It is preferable to use smaller bulbs with less heat
- **NEVER** use the lights when your are not at home or when you are asleep. Purchase timers for extra security.

### Fireplace

- Use a screen at the base of the fireplace and a flash arrester at the top of the chimney to keep sparks off the roof
- **NEVER** use any paper or flammable liquids in the fireplace
- Make sure the damper is open before building the fire
- Use aged wood and an approved product designed for igniting a fire in the fireplace or a gas fired log lighter that has been installed by a licensed plumber and purchased through a reliable company

### Holiday Driving Safety

- Be alert to possible drunk drivers especially during the hours of 10:00pm-4:00am
- **NEVER** drink & drive! Have a Designated Driver

H.F.D.  
F.Y.I.



The Houston Fire Department would like to remind parents that we are here to help keep kids safe.

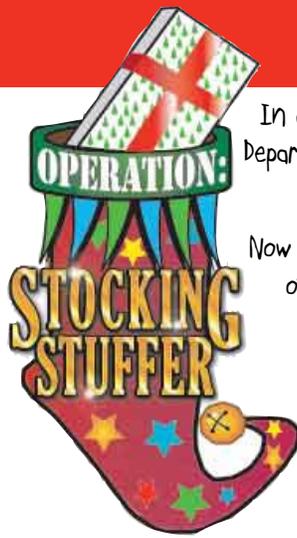
Just as there is a church in every neighborhood to support it's residents, there is a fire house nearby when someone feels threatened by a stranger, friend or family member. All Fire Stations are "Safe Havens," places for both children and adults to come to if they feel they are in immediate danger (such as being followed by another person or vehicle).

Houston Firefighters will make sure the person is okay and contact the local authorities. We encourage parents to tell children that this is a "safe" place they can go to if they are lost or feel they are in danger from a family member, friend or stranger. The firefighters will keep them safe until the parents and police can assist the child.

Parents and guardians should teach their children that strangers are not only people that they have never met, but can be people they don't know too well. Even if they recognize the person from down the street or from the corner store, the person can still be a stranger who means them harm. Also, every child should know how to call 9-1-1 and ask for help.

Children should have several safe refuges they can turn to besides a fire station such as a neighbor you trust, a business that you are familiar with or a police station.

## The Houston Fire Department's Annual Toy Drive has begun!



In conjunction with local non-profit organizations, the Houston Fire Department is collecting toys to help make this holiday season a joyous one for disadvantaged children in the Houston area.

Now through December 17th, you can drop a new, unwrapped toy by any of our 90 HFD Fire Stations. For a complete list of fire stations and their locations, please visit: [www.houstonfire.org](http://www.houstonfire.org).

For more information on how you can donate a new toy call:

**HFD public Affairs 713-495-7900**

Due to the tremendous demand for toys, we cannot accept any clothing donations.

## "ADOPT-A-FIRE STATION"

The "Adopt-A-Fire Station" Program was created to give citizens and civic, professional and business groups a formal vehicle by which they may make tangible donations to the fire stations of their choice.

The program, jointly administered by the Houston Fire Department and the General Services Department, involves directing donor materials and services to the fire station the donor desires "to adopt." The program does not replace the city's established fire station restoration program currently administered by the General Services Department. Rather, it serves as a supplement.

For more information please visit: <http://www.houstontx.gov/fire/community/adopt.html> or call 713-495-7906



HFD will be hosting an  
**Open House at Fire Station 41,  
805 Pearl Street at Amarillo,  
Saturday, December 6, 2008**

**10:00am-1:00pm.**

Meet your local firefighters and Captain Elmo, The Fire Safety Robot. We will have free smoke detectors, fire safety information and balloons and stuff for the kids so come join us for the fun.



**Did You Remember To Change  
The Batteries In Your Smoke  
Detector When You Changed  
Your Clock?**

**If Not...  
DO IT TODAY!**

**only \$75  
PER PLAYER**

**save This Date! April 6, 2009**

**5th Annual Houston Firefighter's  
Charity Golf Classic**

Benefiting The Houston Firefighters Protection Fund

**Southwyck Golf Club  
2901 Clubhouse Drive, Pearland, Texas**

**Play Begins at 8:00am  
2-Person Scramble**

**Tournament Sponsors  
Needed!**

**Contact: Kenyada Parker  
713-495-7924 for more information  
or to become a tournament sponsor.  
E-mail: [kenyada.parker@cityofhouston.net](mailto:kenyada.parker@cityofhouston.net)**

