

Flood protections keep Texas Children's Hospital running through Harvey

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AUSTIN, Texas — The United States' largest children's hospital was fully prepared when record-breaking rainfall stemming from Hurricane Harvey caused historic, catastrophic flooding across southeast Texas last year.

Texas Children's Hospital kept its doors open and kept saving lives as Houston flooded during the five-day storm. The hospital's main facility canceled elective and most outpatient services, but it never turned away any patients.

The hospital was able to deliver uninterrupted inpatient care because of mitigation measures such as floodgates that prevented its main facility from flooding, even as 3-foot-high water rushed through streets nearby. Some other Houston-area hospitals had to evacuate during the storm because of flooding.

Texas Children's provided care to hundreds of patients during the multi-day flood. Its staff's intense preparation also enabled the hospital to deliver 59 babies and aid in the lifesaving rescue and treatment of children across the Houston area who desperately needed dialysis but were trapped by flooding.

Texas Children's has three hospital locations in the Houston area, but its main facility, in Houston's Texas Medical Center, is where most of its 600 inpatients and 2,500 staff members were located during the storm.



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That facility was minimally impacted and lost no services during the storm. Its flood protection measures include flood doors, floodgates, elevated utilities, impact-resistant glazing on windows and continuous flood-monitoring systems.

Texas Children's, which has 851 beds and 14,000 employees, spent \$13.6 million in the past 20 years to protect itself from flooding in Texas Medical Center. That includes \$2.8 million in grants from FEMA.

Texas Children's activated its emergency preparedness plan several days before Harvey made landfall in Texas on Aug. 25, 2017, as a Category 4 hurricane. Harvey, the second-costliest natural disaster in U.S. history behind Hurricane Katrina, forced almost 780,000 Texans to evacuate their homes.

On the evening of Aug. 28, Dr. Michael Braun, Texas Children's chief of renal service, contacted the Coast Guard to ask for help rescuing 33 children across the Houston area who had missed dialysis treatments because they were trapped by flooding. Failure to receive dialysis can lead to serious complications and death for kidney failure patients like those who missed their treatments. They normally receive dialysis multiple times a week.

A variety of agencies worked with the Coast Guard, including the Air Force and Houston's police and fire departments, to rescue the children and bring them to Texas Children's.

Among the rescued children was a 16-year-old girl from Channelview, Texas, who was picked up by a medical helicopter on the evening of Aug. 29 with the help of neighborhood residents who shined flashlights to help guide the pilot to her, according to the Huffington Post. Also on Aug. 29, a helicopter rescued a 3-year-old boy in Bryan, Texas, about 100 miles from Houston.



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By the afternoon of Aug. 30, all the children had received dialysis at Texas Children's.

For additional information on Hurricane Harvey and Texas recovery, visit the Hurricane Harvey disaster web page at www.fema.gov/disaster/4332, Facebook at www.facebook.com/FEMAHarvey, the FEMA Region 6 Twitter account at www.twitter.com/FEMARegion6 or the Texas Division of Emergency Management website at <https://www.dps.texas.gov/dem/>.



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