

ALWAYS BE PREPARED



This year's Atlantic hurricane season has been unusually active, as we have all seen and heard. The catastrophic damage caused by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria that made US landfall in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico,

respectively, between late August and mid-September continues to be an important humanitarian issue.

Death and destruction are only part of the devastating effects of these natural disasters. With thoughts and images of limited food and cell service, scarce fuel, and an inconceivable amount of cleanup swirling around in your head, you may be tempted to queue up R.E.M.'s "It's the End of the World." But recovery efforts are under way, and, amazingly, the Florida Keys reopened to tourists just 3 weeks after Hurricane Irma unleashed its fury on the area. For others, returning to *status quo* may take more time. Parts of Texas affected by Harvey are still digging out and trying to resume regular activities while facing a housing crisis. And, at the time we write this, in early October, more than half of Puerto Rico is still without drinking water, and many remain without power. Authorities say the power outage could last months in some places. Perhaps worst of all, Hurricane Maria destroyed many of the island's hospitals and clinics.

Do you have a plan in place in the event of a disaster? Do you have water, candles, flashlights, and batteries stockpiled? We can all take a lesson from the Scout Motto, which admonishes us to be prepared. We might not be able to predict when and where the next hurricane, earthquake, or lightning strike will occur, but if we are always in a state of readiness in mind and body, then we will be better able to act in an appropriate and timely

manner. Maintaining this state of mental preparedness will come in handy not only during natural disasters, but also in medical emergencies and in surgical situations in which unplanned complications arise.

Now, back to hurricanes of a different sort. You probably know that hurricane is also the name of a cocktail that is popular in New Orleans. And, as we all know, the annual meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) is around the corner—in New Orleans, as it happens. This is fitting, as the Crescent City knows all too well about the time, resources, and manpower needed to come back from the devastating effects of a hurricane.

In response to the recent hurricanes and the earthquakes that have affected Mexico during the same period, the AAO and the Pan-American Association of Ophthalmology established an emergency relief fund to help those in the affected areas get the services and aid they need. Our friends, family, and colleagues in these locales still need assistance. Contributions can be made at bit.ly/DisasterRelief2017. Your tax-deductible donation at that site will go to Americares, a nonprofit disaster relief and global health organization.

To those of you who will be in NOLA next month: Look around you while you are there and appreciate the community's resilience and its resurgence since Hurricane Katrina. And know that, although it may take time for those affected by this year's hurricanes to rebuild and get back to normal, they will get there—especially with the support of those who take the time and thought to donate to the effort. ■

Allen C. Ho, MD,
Chief Medical Editor

Robert L. Avery, MD,
Associate Medical Editor