

Harvey aftermath: More chemical fires possible as city loses clean water

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Fire at flooded chemical plant

[Rescues ongoing in flooded Texas cities](#)



Cooper rides along in dramatic chopper rescue

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- [Death toll from hurricane and aftermath climbs to 39](#)
 - [A Beaumont hospital system shuts down because the city has no clean water](#)

(CNN)Flood-stricken southeast Texas struggled Thursday with a new series of blows that left one city without running water, the operators of a flood-damaged chemical plant warning of additional fires and at least one hospital unable to care for patients.

Nearly a week after Hurricane Harvey slammed into the Texas coast, desperate residents remain stranded without food and water in the wake of unprecedented flooding. Meanwhile, authorities continue to search for survivors and make helicopter rescues from rooftops as the death toll from Harvey and its aftermath climbed to at least 39.

Why we don't know yet Harvey's true toll?

Given the disaster's scope, the commanding officer who led the federal response to Hurricane Katrina a dozen years ago questioned the adequacy of current relief efforts.

"When you have a combination of hurricane winds, flooding now for five days and you start losing the water and the electric grid, this is a game changer," retired Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré told CNN on Thursday.

"Losing electricity itself is a disaster for over a 24-hour period in America to any person because we lose access to water, we lose access to sewers, we lose our ability to communicate."

Janice Forse cries at a shelter Wednesday in Beaumont after her home was flooded.

The dangers emerging from the historic storm seem to increase by the day.

Beaumont, east of Houston, has no running water after both its water pumps failed, forcing a hospital to shut down. City officials could not say when service would be restored.

In Crosby, two blasts rocked a flooded chemical plant, and more could come.

And in Houston, authorities started going door to door looking for victims, hoping to find survivors but realizing that the death toll could rise.

Rainfall totals would fill Houston Astrodome 85,000 times

The storm dumped an estimated 27 trillion gallons of rain over Texas and Louisiana over six days, said Ryan Maue, of the weather analytics company Weather Bell. That's enough to fill the Houston Astrodome 85,000 times or San Francisco Bay 10.6 times at high tide.

"We will see additional losses of life, if history is any precedent here," Tom Bossert, homeland security adviser to President Trump, told reporters Thursday.

The storm has damaged or destroyed about 100,000 homes, Bossert said.

President Donald Trump plans to donate \$1 million of his money to help storm victims, according to the White House.

"You should continue to have confidence in what we're doing as a government," Bossert said. "But I would be remiss if I didn't stop and say that none of that matters if you're an affected individual."

FEMA reported Thursday that more than 96,000 people in Texas have been approved for emergency assistance, including financial aid for rent and lost property. More than \$57 million has already been distributed for housing, personal property and transportation assistance.

In the hard-hit city of Rockport, Vice President Mike Pence addressed residents outside a church.

"President Trump sent us here to say, 'We are with you. The American people are with you,'" said Pence, who later announced that Trump will visit Houston and other areas on Saturday.

Company warns of more blasts

A pair of blasts at the Arkema chemical plant in Crosby sent plumes of smoke into the sky Thursday morning, and the company warned more blasts could follow.

"We want local residents to be aware that product is stored in multiple locations on the site, and a threat of additional explosion remains," [Arkema said](#). "Please do not return to the area within the evacuation zone until local emergency response authorities announce it is safe to do so."

Overheated organic peroxides caused blasts at a chemical plant in Crosby.

The twin blasts Thursday morning happened after organic peroxides overheated. The chemicals need to be kept cool, but the temperature rose after the plant lost power, officials said.

Containers popped. One caught fire and sent black smoke 30 to 40 feet into the air.

The thick smoke "might be irritating to the eyes, skin and lungs," Arkema officials said.

Fifteen Harris County sheriff's deputies were hospitalized, but the smoke they inhaled was not believed to be toxic, the department said. The deputies have all been released.

Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez said nothing toxic was emitted and there was no imminent danger to the community.

Here's how to help victims of Hurricane Harvey

Three other containers storing the same chemical are at risk of "overpressurization," said Jeff Carr of Griffin Communications Group, which is representing Arkema.

Arkema shut down the facility as Harvey approached last week. The company evacuated everyone within 1.5 miles of the plant as a precaution after it was flooded under more than 5 feet of water.

The company has said there's a small possibility the organic peroxide, which is used in the production of plastic resins, could seep into floodwaters, without igniting or burning.

Harvey forced the shut down of many chemical or oil plants, including the [Colonial Pipeline](#), which carries huge amounts of gasoline and other fuel between Houston and the East Coast. Valero and Motiva, [the largest refinery in the country](#), have also closed some facilities.

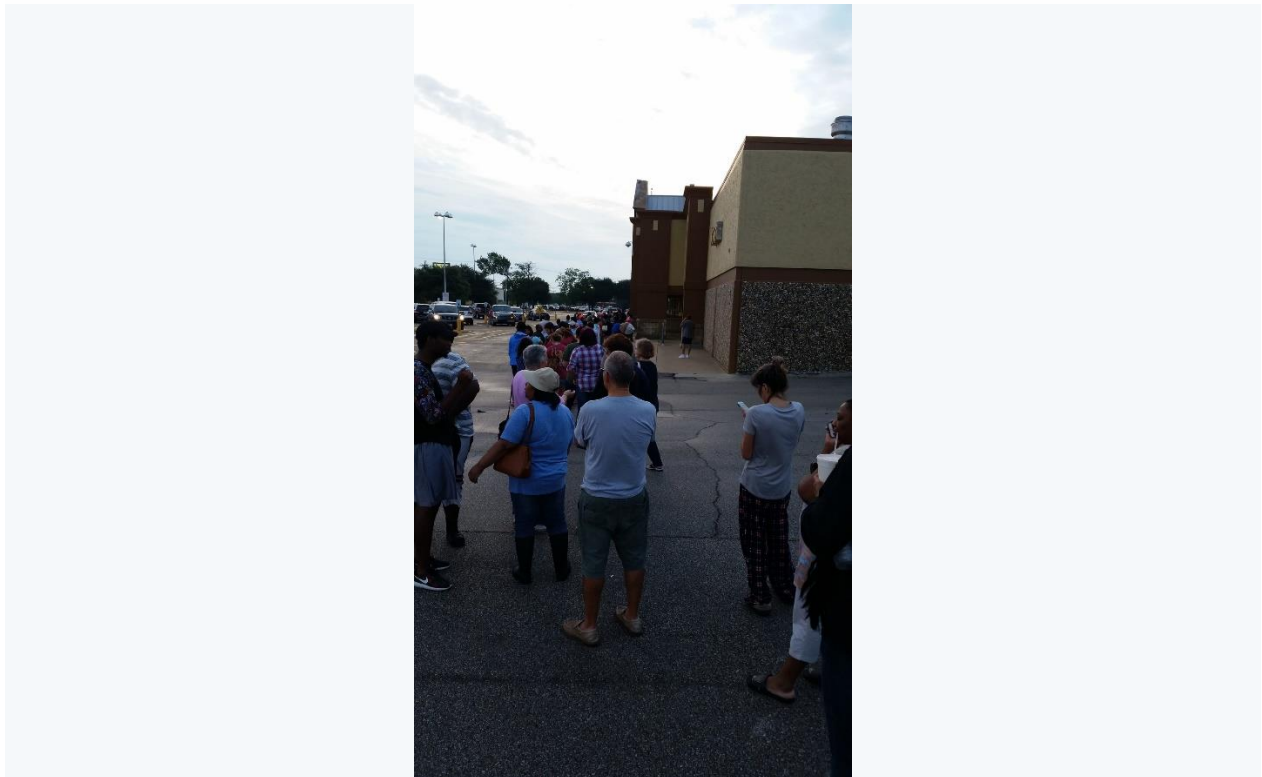
'People are freaking out' in Beaumont

Extreme flooding caused both of Beaumont's water pumps to fail, leaving about 135,000 people without water on Thursday, said Jefferson County Judge Jeff Branick.

"We will have to wait until the water levels from this historical flood recede before we can determine the extent of damage and make any needed repairs," the city said. "There is no way to determine how long this will take at this time."

City officials plan to establish a water distribution point on Friday.

Meanwhile, earlier Thursday, residents lined up at stores hours before they opened in hopes of getting whatever bottled water they could find.



Standing in line in Beaumont, Tx at Market Basket to buy water. It's 7am, they open at 6:50 a.m. "People are freaking out." At a local Walmart, Jeffrey Farley said the store was only allowing 20 people in at a time and was rationing water to three cases per customer. He got in line at 6:30 a.m. and waited until 8:30 to get his water.

"It's crazy," said Khayvin Williams, who started waiting in line at Market Basket at 6:50 a.m. "People are freaking out." At a local Walmart, Jeffrey Farley said the store was only allowing 20 people in at a time and was rationing water to three cases per customer. He got in line at 6:30 a.m. and waited until 8:30 to get his water.

"It's an insult to injury for a lot of folks," Farley said. "The water situation has made things dire for everyone here."

Beaumont, along with Port Arthur, was devastated after Harvey made another landfall Wednesday.

Some hospitals hang on as others close amid Harvey's floods

The failure of the city's water pump forced the closure of Beaumont-based Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas.

"Due to the citywide lack of services, we have no other alternative but to discontinue all services, which will include emergency services," the hospital system said Thursday.

Patients in stretchers and wheelchairs were evacuated to other hospitals by ambulance and helicopter.

"We had no idea when we went to bed at midnight that ... we'd get the call that says the hospital would need to think about the city's water being lost," hospital spokeswoman Mary Poole said. "We did not expect that and that's a game changer for us."

'I have no food. I have no water.'

About 20 miles southeast of Beaumont, in Port Arthur, those lucky enough to get to a shelter were deluged again, when murky brown floodwater filled an evacuation shelter.



Evacuees at a Port Arthur emergency shelter battle flooding once more after leaving their homes.

Actress Amber Chardae Robinson, speaking by phone from Beaumont, said getting out of Port Arthur was virtually impossible.

"Every avenue we use to get out of the city is flooded -- to get to Houston is flooded, to get to Louisiana is flooded," she said. "So people are just trying to figure out ways to get their family out of there at this point."

In most of Orange County, east of Beaumont, a mandatory evacuation order was issued Thursday afternoon by Judge Stephen Brint Carlton. The order primarily involves areas along the Neches and Sabine rivers.

Death toll expected to rise

Across the state, families are searching tirelessly for missing relatives six days after Harvey first pummeled the Texas coast



Photos: Hurricane Harvey slams Texas

The Coast Guard has rescued more than 6,000 people, and Houston police and firefighters have rescued several thousand more.

Among the storm-related deaths are a Houston man who was electrocuted while walking in floodwaters and a mother whose body was floating about a half mile from her car. Rescuers found her daughter clinging to her body. The child is in stable condition after suffering from hypothermia.

"We just pray that the body count ... won't rise significantly," Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo said Wednesday.

But Houston received a bit of good news Thursday. The pool level at Barker Reservoir - which officials feared would overflow -- has peaked and is going down, the Army Corps of Engineers said.



Residents evacuate their homes near Houston's Addicks Reservoir on Tuesday.

And the city's Addicks Reservoir, which was overwhelmed and caused widespread flooding this week, has also peaked. The water in that reservoir is also receding.

While there were still flood issues facing parts of Houston, Mayor Sylvester Turner said the city is drying out. And traffic is returning to roadways.

"We are turning the corner," said Turner, who flew over the city Thursday with other officials.

In a light moment amid the destruction, Houston police posted a video Thursday of an officer's daughter serenading him on his birthday.

In Victoria, about 120 miles southwest of Houston, Mary Martinez returned to her heavily damaged home Wednesday.

"I did not think it was going to be this bad," said Martinez, who received assistance from volunteers with Christian charity Samaritan's Purse. "I was speechless."

Man tried to warn off friend from electrical wire

Countless stories of heroism have emerged in the aftermath of Harvey, including by some of the victims.

Andrew Pasek was walking through 4 feet of water trying to get to his sister's house when he accidentally stepped on a live electrical wire.



[Doctor braves Harvey flooding in canoe to perform teen's surgery](#)

"He felt the charge and knew something was wrong right away and tried to shake it off right away," said his mother, Jodell.

The 25-year-old quickly asked a friend to get away from him "because if you do, you know, you will go, too," he told his friend.

Pasek was electrocuted. His mother said no one could try to resuscitate him for an hour, until the electricity was turned off.

"It could have been anybody," she said.

CNN's Paul Murphy, Dakin Andone, Nick Valencia, AnneClaire Stapleton, Amanda Watts, Tina Burnside, Dave Alsup, Keith Allen and Chuck Johnston contributed to this report.