

The Greater Houston Partnership’s Regional Resilience strategic imperative aims to position Houston as the most resilient coastal city in the world. Our work focuses on strengthening the critical systems that make life normal: power, communications systems, transportation, healthcare, flood control and storm surge, and other essential infrastructure. This brief update highlights several action areas for Houston executives and their teams to bolster their own organization’s and the region’s resilience.

Five Questions CEO’s Need to Ask Their Teams: Communications Systems

Reliable communications systems – wired and wireless, voice and data – are critical for business continuity, yet the definition of “resilience” often remains unclear. Through our work, Houston’s telecommunications experts offered these five questions that CEOs should ask their technology and connectivity teams to ensure their wireless and broadband systems can withstand disruptions, helping leaders make smart, informed decisions to protect operations and reputation.

Do we have more than one internet/data service provider, and do those services come into the building at different access points? Do we have wireless internet failover or backup?

Provider redundancy is only effective if the physical paths into the building are diverse. A single point of failure (like one utility pole) can take down both services; also, a back-up wireless failover solution can help maintain mission-critical connectivity.

Have we investigated if any of our employees are eligible for prioritized wireless services such as FirstNet (Built with AT&T) or Frontline (by Verizon)?

Primarily reserved for emergency first responders, prioritized mobile access during a crisis may also extend to certain professions who support response and recovery including physicians, nurses, and critical hospital workers, utility system techs and drivers, and other public safety-oriented professions. Eligibility is determined by federal statute and/or carrier.

Are our communication systems tested regularly for resilience? When was the last time we simulated a major outage? Do we regularly test our backup systems?

CEOs should ask when the last test was run — and what the results were. This includes recovery drills, cyber security audits and load testing. Also, backup systems are only useful if they work when needed. Test them!

How quickly can we detect and respond to a communications outage? How quickly can we switch to a back-up system?

Uptime depends on visibility. Ensure your team uses 24/7 monitoring with real-time alerts that detect outages instantly and notify the right people to respond. It’s not just about having backups — it’s about how fast they activate. CEOs should know if failovers are automatic or manual, and how long it takes.

Can our team continue working if our primary office loses power or connectivity?

Business continuity depends on remote access. Ensure cloud-based systems, VPNs, and mobile hotspots are ready to support operations offsite.

Power Systems: Registering Critical Loads That Support “Public Safety” or “Industrial Critical Loads”

Reliable power delivery is key to regional resilience. In almost all cases, the regional utility will protect and restore electrical service in a manner that gets the most customers online in the shortest amount of time. **All companies and facilities should consider redundant power solutions as there is no guarantee of uninterrupted service.**

Certain premises or “loads” are specially designated by the state as “critical loads.” According to the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT), a “critical load public safety customer” is *any facility where electric service is essential for protecting or maintaining public safety*, such as hospitals, police and fire stations, critical water and wastewater facilities, and customers with in-house life-sustaining equipment. A “critical load industrial customer” is an *industrial facility where a loss or suspension of electric service could create dangerous or life-threatening conditions on the premises.*

All entities with critical loads should register with their local Office of Emergency Management.

CenterPoint Energy has also established a portal for entities in their service territory to submit loads they believe qualify for this designation. Those loads already established with CenterPoint Energy or your local OEM do not need to be re-submitted.

Scan here for more information



Crisis Calls – Emergency Preparation and Recovery Coordination Calls

When a hurricane or other severe weather event is approaching – or during an active crisis – emergency preparation and recovery coordination calls provide real-time updates and coordination guidance. These calls, often hosted by public safety officials, may be open to companies and organizations, to varying degrees, to either listen in to, or actively participate.

CenterPoint Energy Call for Partnership Board Members

CenterPoint Energy has graciously offered to keep the Partnership’s board members informed in a time of emergency. The company will offer their view of the impending weather event and then updates on the resilience of the power system and restoration progress and plans in the recovery phase.

The Partnership will send out call information to all board members in advance of these calls. No need to register.

Statewide and Regional Coordination Calls

The Partnership has discussed the following calls with the relevant owners, and many Partnership companies are already participating. They are open to inviting other relevant companies to participate. **Scan the QR code and let our team know if your company would like to be included in one or more of these calls.**

Harris County Joint Information Call (“JIC Call”)

Broad advisory call featuring weather and county-level updates. Includes updates from local and state emergency offices, and when appropriate, updates from regional utilities, telecom, and healthcare entities among others. Focus is the communication of clear and concise messaging to regional decision-makers in the public sector along with other key entities.

Host: Harris County Office of Emergency Management

Who should participate: Corporate emergency preparedness/operations leadership

Format: Listen only mode

Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) Statewide Emergency Daily Call

Daily statewide call that covers any and all declared emergencies across the state. Call will include updates from the state’s various emergency response organizations and when appropriate, updates from regional utilities, telecom, and healthcare entities.

Host: Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM)

Who should participate: Corporate emergency preparedness/operations leadership

Format: Listen only mode

Multi-Agency Call – Houston Urban Area Security Initiative – Department of Homeland Security (“MAC Call”)

Convenes regional government agencies and policy makers for high-level alignment. Participation is generally limited to disaster response, regional county/city officials, Houston-Galveston Area Council, and some businesses when relevant including utilities, telecommunications, healthcare, etc.

Host: Houston Urban Area Security Initiative, a U.S. Department of Homeland Security program

Who should participate: Public safety critical systems including utilities, telcos, healthcare

Format: Discussion-based

Special-Purpose Coordination Calls

These calls are limited in purpose to coordinate between regional emergency management officials and a specific industry or service.

Critical Supply Chain Working Group Call

Facilitates discussion on gaps and solutions related to the delivery of critical services and products. Profile of existing participants include the transportation and logistics sector, grocery, pharmacy, fuel/service stations, and associations representing restaurants and hotels.

Host: Mayor’s Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security

Who should participate: Critical supply chain system owners

Format: Discussion-based

Harris County Industrial Call

Coordination call among industrial plant and pipeline operators to discuss emergency preparedness response and recovery operations, along with restoration efforts. Provides situational awareness of government activities and to address any restoration gaps the industry has.

Host: Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management

Who should participate: Critical industrial site owners

Format: Discussion-based

Scan the QR code and let our team know if your company would like to be included in one or more of these calls.

