

# When Disaster Struck, ACFAS Member Stepped It Up

When Hurricane Harvey hit Houston last summer, Frank Henry, DPM, FACFAS, a foot and ankle surgeon with a practice in nearby Victoria, Texas, quickly took action. Once water and power were restored to his office, which had fortunately suffered mostly exterior damage, he and his staff began a shoe drive that ultimately collected 2,000 pairs for the community.

“The response was overwhelming,” recalls Dr. Henry. “People brought in carloads of new shoes to donate.” And with so many residents having no choice but to wade through contaminated flood water during the storm cleanup, he says the ability to provide them with new and gently used shoes went a long way in helping to prevent foot infections. Dr. Henry and his staff also provided free and reduced-fee services to first responders and to anyone else injured or otherwise involved in the relief efforts.

Dr. Henry credits his training as a foot and ankle surgeon and his experience with previous Texas storms with helping him

anticipate which injuries and conditions would be more prevalent during the hurricane cleanup. He was prepared to treat an increased number of broken ankles and feet as well as infections and diabetic foot ulcerations. He also screened for *Vibrio* and other infections so they could be identified early in patients, and he provided public service announcements through the local newspaper, television stations and Facebook to remind residents to dispose of their wet and worn shoes.

While Dr. Henry and his staff faced considerable challenges in the hurricane’s aftermath, they made sure they could provide their usual services for the community and even extended their office hours to accommodate patients in need of immediate care. And thanks to their careful planning prior to the hurricane’s landfall, they helped ensure that patients’ records remained secure.

“Once we knew Hurricane Harvey was headed for Texas, we worked with our electronic medical record (EMR) system’s



**“Knowing we were there to help the citizens of Victoria get back on their feet was so rewarding.”**

— Frank Henry, DPM, FACFAS

technical support team to transfer patient records digitally to the Cloud,” Dr. Henry explains. “We now have standard operating procedures in place for exporting patient records to an offsite location,” he adds, “so we’re well prepared for any future storms that affect our area.” Since Hurricane Harvey, Dr. Henry has converted all of his office telephone landlines to VOIP Internet-based phones that can be accessed from any location with Internet service and will also forward calls to the doctor’s and staff’s cell phones if Internet service is disrupted.

Dr. Henry and his staff will always remember the outpouring of generosity from the community, local businesses and faith-based organizations and how everyone came together to support those who lost so much during the hurricane. “Knowing we were there to help the citizens of Victoria get back on their feet was so rewarding,” says Dr. Henry. “I have an even greater appreciation and respect for our fellow Texans who go above and beyond to help others in their time of need.”



**“I have an even greater appreciation and respect for our fellow Texans who go above and beyond to help others in their time of need.”**

— Frank Henry, DPM, FACFAS

## **Dr. Henry’s Six Tips for Preparing Your Practice for a Natural Disaster**

1. Prepare to evacuate early and also encourage your staff to do so. Do not wait until the last minute. Even if storm predictions are uncertain, it is much better to evacuate unnecessarily than to be stuck in potentially deadly storm conditions. Do not allow yourself or your team to become victims.
2. Consider converting your office phones to VOIP Internet phone systems that can be accessed from anywhere.
3. Move your EMR system to the Cloud.
4. If you do not have Cloud EMR access, back up your data to portable hard drives and take them with you. Print out hardcopy appointment schedules for at least 30 days with patient phone numbers and distribute them to doctors and key staff. If you can export this information along with patient records into PDF files, consider doing so while being mindful of HIPAA regulations.
5. Make sure you have adequate insurance for wind, rain and flood risks prior to hurricane season. Consider adding practice income interruption insurance if available.
6. Coordinate and stay in touch with your staff team before, during and after the storm. You cannot do this alone.