

# How President Trump and the media should respond to Hurricane Harvey

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By **Hugh Hewitt** August 25

It's no secret that how a president responds to a natural disaster can affect his fortunes. President Barack Obama's reaction to Hurricane Sandy contributed significantly to his 2012 reelection. President George W. Bush's fumbled response to Hurricane Katrina was part of a ruinous sequence of events in 2005 that destroyed his second term's political momentum.

Neither event was exclusive in its impact — Obama benefited greatly from moderator Candy Crowley's intervention in a presidential debate with Mitt Romney, for example, and [Harriet Miers's failed nomination](#) to the Supreme Court greatly hurt Bush's standing — but major disasters always amplify the president's role as national leader and cheerleader. A well-timed visit to the site of a terrible loss of property and often lives rallies residents, raises money and reduces hopelessness.

So, here's some specific advice for President Trump.

First, watch all of the coverage closely. Speak with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (R) and Federal Emergency Management Agency Director Brock Long often. If you must tweet, tweet only about the storm and its impacts. Don't golf or dine out. Act as a concerned family member would when news of a family tragedy arrives but details are few. Avoid all other controversies.

Then, do as you did in the aftermath of the flooding [in Louisiana last summer](#). Show up and pitch in when Abbott invites you.

And some advice for my colleagues in the media: Be very slow to politicize this storm. It looks to be quite awful in its impacts. The pull of domestic politics generally and the president specifically on every story is so strong these days that it takes great intentionality to not make this an occasion for another round of Trump trashing or boosterism.

And, crucially, if people express online or on air that they are praying for the victims of the storm, ditch the snarky assaults on such traditional expressions. It's not a sentiment. It's a real and often cherished act and gift.

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