



"Leading Through the Eye of the Storm: Crisis Communications Playbook at Tampa General Hospital"

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SVP, Tampa General Hospital

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Agenda

- About Tampa General
- Our Approach to Crisis Communications
- External Communications Strategy
- Internal Communications Strategy
- Lessons Learned
- Resources



Learning Objectives

- Strategic Planning for Crisis Communications
- The Value of Teamwork
- The Importance of Metrics



About Tampa General

Tampa General By the Numbers



32+ Entities
in Enterprise

7 Hospitals

Owned and
Managed

\$4+

Billion
Net Revenue



150+
Locations
Across Florida



15,000+
Team Members &
Medical Staff

700+

Residents &
Fellows

70+

Training
Programs



1,100+
Clinical Trials

#1

**Transplant
Center**
in the country



**Level 1
Trauma Center**



24th%

In Overall Quality
(per Vizient
Rankings)

....And By the Viral AquaFence

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

Climate Solutions

How the AquaFence protected Tampa's hospital during Helene

Tampa's main hospital sits on an island — and a temporary floodwall protected it from a major storm surge.

September 27, 2024



'AquaFence' Goes Viral as It Protects Tampa General Hospital From Hurricane Helene Flooding

AquaFence was founded in 1999 and has offices in Norway and New Jersey.

BY ERIN DAVIS SEP 27, 2024

Share



Jennifer Davis Taylor

October 11, 2024

2 min

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AquaFence Hurricane

Storm Surge

Tampa General Hospital

Tag

First Helene, now Milton. TGH was able to get through both.

Tampa General Hospital (TGH) has successfully weathered Hurricane Milton, with an assist from its AquaFence. It's the second time in two weeks the innovative flood prevention device has protected the Tampa Bay region's only Level 1 Trauma Center.

The water-impermeable barrier was installed to protect vulnerable areas of TGH's campus against storm surge up to 15 feet above sea level.

"Preparing for Hurricane Milton was an incredible effort by the entire team and a true test of our resources, but it ensured we could continue to provide exceptional care for our patients in a high-quality, safe and uninterrupted environment before, during and after the storm," TGH President and CEO John Couris said. "Tampa General is open to support communities impacted and particularly our first responders. Working together, we will come back from Milton stronger than ever."

The hospital also used the AquaFence during Hurricane Helene, which caused widespread flooding in coastal and low-lying areas throughout the Tampa Bay area, despite not taking a direct hit from the storm.

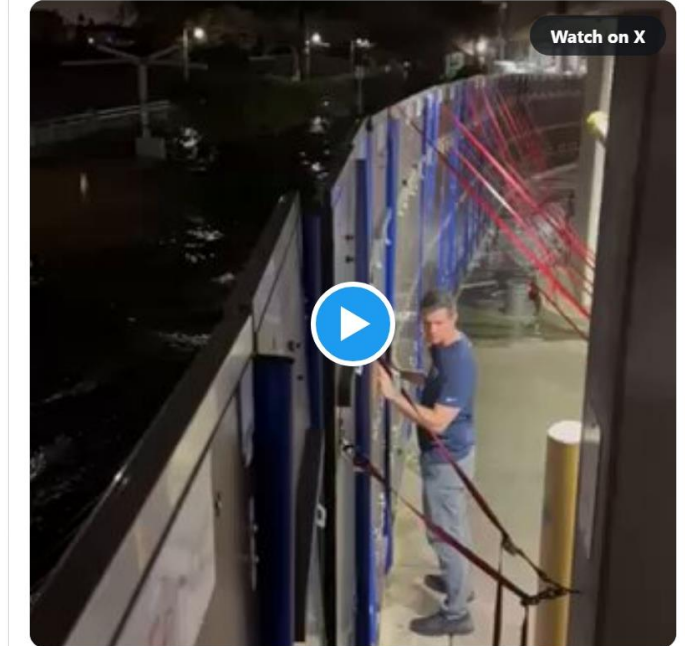
TGH implements a comprehensive mitigation plan ahead of severe weather.



Tampa General Hospital
@TGHcares · Follow



As #HurricaneHelene continues, the AquaFence at TGH stands firm. The water-impermeable barrier is designed to withstand storm surge up to 15 feet. It has worked through multiple rain events to prevent storm waters from impacting hospital operations. #WeAreTGH #StormWatch



10:44 PM · Sep 26, 2024

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Our Approach to Crisis Communications

Our Approach to Crisis Communications:

- **THE PLAYBOOK:** A crisis communications plan developed to guide communications and media relations in the event of a hurricane or other natural disaster.
- **INCLUDES:**
 - Key Objectives
 - Team Assignments
 - Spokespersons & Contact Info
 - Media List
 - Messaging / Fact Sheet
 - Best Practices
 - Strengths and Vulnerabilities
 - Vehicles of Communication
 - Pre-Drafted Materials & Templates
 - Holding Statements
 - Timeline for Distribution

**TAMPA GENERAL HOSPITAL
HURRICANE COMMS PLAN
UPDATED SEPTEMBER 3, 2025**

Background	This crisis communications plan was developed to guide external communications and media relations in the event of a hurricane or other natural disaster that immediately impacts Tampa General Hospital (TGH) or the surrounding area.
Crisis Communications Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Underscore that the safety of patients, visitors and team members is number one priority.• Demonstrate hurricane preparedness and timely response.• Communicate operations updates effectively and in a timely manner.• Show compassion for communities impacted.• Thank first responders.
Parameters	<p>Do's</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set a timeline to distribute information so that media and the public know when the next update will be shared.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The NOAA National Hurricane Center (NHC) issues tropical cyclone advisory products every six hours at

External Communications Strategy

External Communications

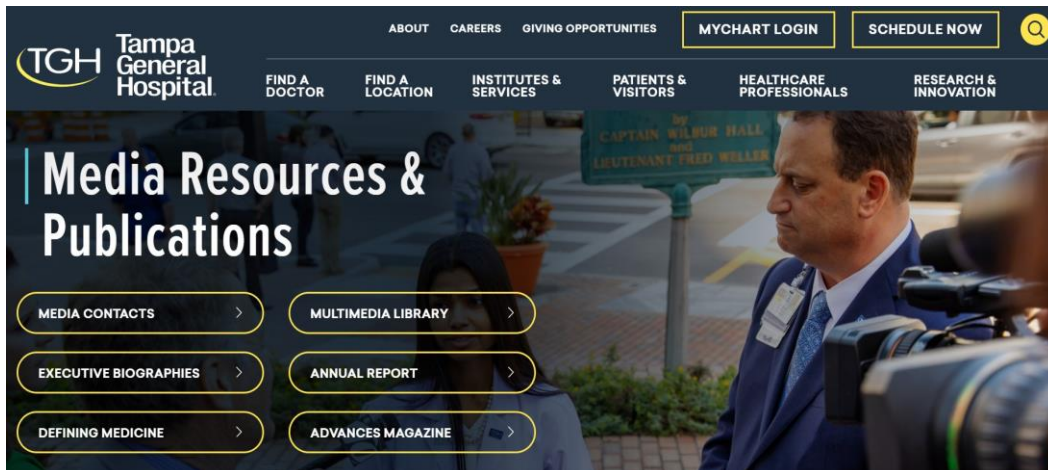
- Our strategy
- Communication channels
- Media before, during and after the storm
- Earned media results and post-storm analysis



Our Media Strategy



- Hurricane season press conference
- Produce assets in advance
- Identify SMEs/backup SMEs
- Conduct media training
- Create/offer interview blocks ahead of and during the storm
- Consider "phoners" to broadcast stations



External Communications Channels

- Press Releases
- Press Inquiries
- Press Availabilities
- Social Media Posts
- Website Updates
- Website Banner
- Google Listings
- Patient Communications



Media Before, During and After the Storm

- **Before:**
 - hurricane press conference/media tour of facilities
- **During:**
 - Team A in Incident Command Center
- **After:**
 - Press release, post-storm interviews, reinforce playbook messaging



Earned Media Results* and Post Storm Recap

- Total reach – 15.85 million
- Ad revenue – nearly \$100 million
- Print and online hits – 2,400-plus
- Languages – at least 12 different languages
- Hurricane team member feedback
- Post-storm internal meetings
- Update playbook

* *From Hurricanes Helene and Milton (occurred Sept. 27-Oct. 9, stats include pre and post storms)*

TRENDING: September Cover: Cyberattacks Are Killing Hospitals | Can AI Make Patient Portals Friendlier? | Peeved Patients

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HOW TGH WITHSTOOD TWO MASSIVE HURRICANES

BY FAST COMPANY | OCTOBER 11, 2024

TOPICS

- Community
- Emergency Medicine
- Healthcare Access
- Innovation
- Patient Safety
- Public Health
- Strategy

Tampa General, a Florida hospital with just over 1,000 beds and the region's only Level 1 trauma center, sits on the tip of Davis Islands. It's one of the lowest-lying neighborhoods in the Florida city, and was a mandatory evacuation zone ahead of Hurricane Milton, which swept across the west coast of Florida Wednesday night. That storm brought intense rain, flooding, and even tornadoes, leaving more than three million people without power. Davis Islands saw at least four feet of storm surge Wednesday night. But Tampa General weathered the storm, thanks in part to its AquaFence. Tampa General did experience some impacts from Hurricane Milton. The hospital said it had some minor leaks Wednesday night, but that its power and supplies held strong, and that there was no threat to staff or patient safety. The hospital remained open Thursday morning.

RECOMMENDED FOR YOU

- Medicare Advantage plans to face stricter directory rules
- Healthcare finance leaders face a challenging environment
- Seattle Children's eliminates 500 jobs, cites federal funding cuts
- Harbor Health acquires 32 VillageMD clinics to quadruple TX footprint
- Collette Health: A Virtual Revolution in High-Acuity Care
- VA to end special salary rate for IT workers

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Internal Communications Strategy

Internal Communications:

- Our Strategy
- Constituents and Communication Channels
- Key Consistent Messages
- Communication Cadence
- Internal communications metrics



Our Strategy

- Collaborate
- Coordinate
- Develop a **Communication Cadence**
- Be **Consistent**
- Understand **challenges**
- **Catalog** communications



Constituents and Communication Channels



- **Identify constituents**
- **Appropriate message, appropriate audience**
- **Right communication channel, right audience, right time**

Key Consistent Messages

Tropical Storm Helene Update

Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2024



Key messages before, during and after the storm:

- Commitment
- Preparedness
- Current State
- Gratitude

INCIDENT COMMAND ALERT



TGH Team Member Communication – Hurricane Milton Update |
Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2024



A Message From
John Couris | President & Chief Executive Officer

Hurricane Helene – Message of Gratitude



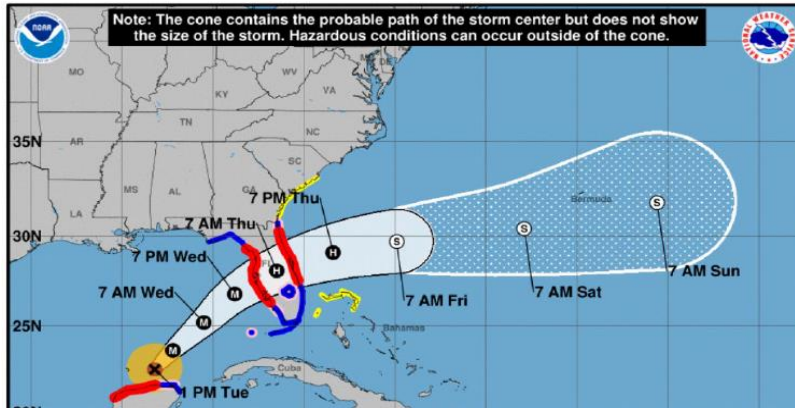
Communication Cadence



Team,

Hurricane Milton remains a strong Category 4 hurricane, with significant impacts forecasted for Florida's west coast. But we stand ready!

We understand that team members assigned to Team A are anxious about the reporting time to TGH Davis Islands on Wednesday at 7 a.m. Please know that the storm is projected to arrive later in the afternoon on Wednesday and Tampa General would never put our team members in danger. The safety of our team members, patients and their families, and the community remains **our number one priority**.



Develop and deploy a communication cadence that is:

- Consistent
- Purposeful
- Measured

Key Metrics*

- Total Internal Written Communications via email – 74
- Total Text Alerts – 10
- Printed Patient Communications – 6
- Videos from President and CEO – 2

**From Hurricanes Helene and Milton (occurred Sept. 27-Oct. 9, stats include pre and post storms)*



Hurricane Helene

Dear Board,

I just wanted to provide you with a quick update. We have weathered Hurricane Helene, and thanks to the team's exceptional hard work and preparedness, we are in sound shape.

As of Friday morning, at 7 a.m., Helene has been downgraded to a Tropical Storm, and Hurricane and Tropical Storm Warnings have been canceled for the entire area. At TGH's main hospital, the AquaFence worked perfectly as designed. We have some minor groundwater flooding in the basement (due to moisture and water pressure) and in low-lying spots outside the fence, including Bayshore Blvd, but we are not experiencing any significant issues impeding operations.

I am also grateful to report that our TGH North hospitals are in good shape and that TGH North Crystal River campus and the TGH Crystal River Freestanding Emergency Center will be up and running by this evening. TGH ambulatory clinic locations are planning for staggered re-openings today.

A Message From

Tyler Carpenter | Vice President, People and Talent
Tony Venezia | Senior Director, Public Safety

TGH Team Member Fueling Stations Available for One More Day

Dear Team,

In order to continue to provide support to our team members who need fuel to travel to work, we will be extending our fueling stations for one more day on **Tuesday, Oct. 15**. We are hearing reports that more than 60% of gas stations across the region have received fuel and anticipate even more returning in the days to come.

Tomorrow, we will have gasoline available at three locations across the health system to support team members returning to work. This resource is for the benefit of **TGH team members only** (TGH, TGH North, USFTGP, TGMG, TGNP, InterHealth, TGH Imaging, TGH Urgent Care powered by Fast Track and USF Providers). We ask you to consider giving priority to those who are scheduled to work on-site this week.

Fueling resources will be available at TGH Brooksville, TGMG Healthpark and The TGH Outpatient Center in Brandon (exact locations are listed below).

Lessons Learned

Three Key Takeaways

- **Consistency = calm**
(messaging, timing, channels, look and feel)
- **Remain proactive** (be prepared, anticipate media/stakeholder requests ahead of storm)
- **It doesn't end once the storm is over** (be nimble with follow-up needs, track wins and opportunities for improvement)



Resources

Resources

- You may obtain a copy of the "template playbook" by scanning this QR code



- If you have any questions or challenges accessing the playbook, please contact Caitlin Wood, cwood@tgh.org.



Questions?

Please be sure to complete the session evaluation on the mobile app!

Jennifer Crabtree

President, Tampa Medical &
Research District and SVP, Tampa
General Hospital
jcrabtree@tgh.org



Jennifer recently assumed the role of President of the Tampa Medical & Research District (TMRD) and Senior Vice President of Tampa General. In this role, Jennifer leads the strategic direction and development of the TMRD, a growing hub of world-class clinical care, academics, research and biotechnology anchored by one of the country's leading academic health systems — Tampa General (TGH), in collaboration with the USF Health Morsani College of Medicine. Additionally, Jennifer leads all corporate communications across the health system. With over a decade of experience in health care marketing, communications and corporate strategy, Jennifer is recognized as an invaluable member of TGH's senior leadership team.

Caitlin Wood

Manager, Corporate
Communications
cwood@tgh.org



Caitlin currently serves as the Manager of Corporate Communications at Tampa General Hospital, where she helps deliver effective multi-channel communications to over 15,000 team members across one of the nation's leading academic health systems. In this role, she works closely with the Vice President of Communications to manage and produce both targeted internal communications and external thought leadership pieces on behalf of the organization's senior leadership team. Caitlin serves as the primary writer for Tampa General president and CEO John Couris.

Caitlin is an accomplished strategic communications professional with over 25 years of experience working with a range of clients.

Tom Zebold

Manager, Corporate
Communications
tzebold@tgh.org



Tom is a Manager of Corporate Communications for Tampa General Hospital (TGH), one of the nation's leading not-for-profit academic health systems, in partnership with the University of South Florida.

In his role, he works in the Office of the President and focuses on internal and external communications for the health system in addition to managing national media and executive thought leadership.

Tom joined TGH in January 2021 as a Content Marketing Specialist before being promoted to MarComm Content Manager, where played an instrumental role in developing TGH's annual report, consumer publications and more.