

Back home safe and sound

We've worked a lot of disasters. But this month a hurricane hit too close to home. While on a well-deserved vacation in Mexico, our Program Coordinator was caught in the path of Hurricane Odile. After being stranded for 5 days without power, running water, cell phone service or flushing toilets, Emily and her sister were evacuated by the Mexican Government and boarded a humanitarian flight to the United States.

Back home safe and sound, here are Emily's preparedness tips for your next trip – be it for work or pleasure:

- Always carry a flashlight and a few energy bars and pick up a bottle of water when you land; you never know when you'll be in an emergency situation. I also travel with a paperback book and a deck of cards.
- Check in with family when you arrive and update them if you change your plans. Also, make sure you leave your passport number (if traveling internationally) with someone at home.
- Check out the basic geography of your destination in advance. It would have been very helpful to have a paper map – not just GPS on a cell phone with low battery and no service.
- If extreme weather or a catastrophe hits, don't forget what you already know. It's not just about staying calm but trusting that you know how to survive.
- Stay flexible – information changes constantly in disaster situations. Be creative: We didn't have running water – and everything was dirty – so we used vodka to clean our hands and plastic forks, (thanks to the room supplies in our all-inclusive resort)
- Make friends – Talk to those around you, ask what they are hearing about the situation. They may have found a solution or stockpile of something you need...but avoid people who are panicking.
- Don't be afraid to leave your baggage. We didn't know if we would be able to take our luggage on the evacuation flight (and it was a long walk to the pick-up point) so we left what we didn't need.
[Your renter's or home insurance should cover lost baggage and contents.](#)

Having adequate insurance, a basic inventory and securely stored financial records is preparedness 101.

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Source: <https://uphelp.org/back-home-safe-and-sound/> Date: February 7, 2026

We were lucky. We had renters insurance and we had homes to return to. Many people UP works with do not. That's why we are partnering with the City of San Francisco, the City of Oakland and the California Earthquake Authority on an outreach campaign about renters and earthquake insurance.

[Watch our PSA featuring Mario Lopez](#) and UP Staff. For more trustworthy tips, follow us on Facebook.

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