

## Jim Rossman: Load these five emergency apps before the next disaster strikes

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In the aftermath of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, I think it's a good time to recommend some apps for your smartphone that you should have before you need them in an emergency.

- First Aid by American Red Cross (free, iOS, Android)

This app gives instruction in basic first aid plus advice on handling emergency situations of all kinds. There are instructional videos and simple step-by-step advice.

The app integrates with your phone so you can dial 911 from the app at any time. The Red Cross app also downloads vital information to your phone so you can access it even if cell towers are down.

- Red Cross Pet First Aid (free, iOS, Android)

While you're taking care of your [family members](#), don't forget you might have to provide first aid for your pets, especially if you can't get to the vet. The app is heavy on dog and cat first aid for more than 25 common pet situations.

- FEMA (free, iOS, Android)

This app brings together lots of good information including weather data from the National Weather Service and tips on what to do before, during and after more than 20 types of disaster. You'll also find updated

information on open shelters and how to contact FEMA personnel at disaster recovery centers. You can also submit your own photos of damage to alert FEMA officials to the situation.

- The Weather Channel (free, iOS, Android)

There are hundreds of weather apps. Chances are you have one or more on your phone already, but if you don't have a preference, I recommend The Weather Channel's app.

If there's a hurricane or other ongoing [weather](#) emergency, you'll see a link to current information on the app's front page.

- Zello (free, iOS, Android)

If you remember Nextel phones, with their push-to-talk walkie-talkie feature, you'll feel right at home with Zello.

The app allows for person-to-person (walkie-talkie) or group calls (think CB radio). Set up the app for all your family members and make sure everyone knows how to use it.

Zello has been around for more than a few [disasters](#), and it is a favorite communication method of the Cajun Navy.

Do yourself a favor and download any or all of these and get acquainted with them before disaster strikes. Setting up Zello for your family can help you communicate with each other, although everyone will need a working cellular data connection or Wi-Fi to speak to each other.

You may also want to check with your insurance company to see what type of app they offer. In the insurance company's app you'll likely find information on how to file a claim and contact your agent.

Of course there are many other disaster apps you can download and use. If you have a favorite, I'd love to hear about it for a future column. Drop me an email with your disaster app suggestions at [jrossman@dallasnews.com](mailto:jrossman@dallasnews.com).

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