

Storms and Jobs: The Effect of Hurricanes on Individuals' Employment and Earnings over the Long Term

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We study the responsiveness of individuals' employment and earnings to the damages and disruption caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, which struck the U.S. Gulf Coast in 2005. Our analysis is based on individual-level survey and administrative data that tracks workers over time -- from 2 years before the storms to 7 years after the storms. We find that the storms reduced earnings of affected individuals over the first year after the storm. Starting in the second year after the storm, however, the storms increased the earnings of affected individuals. The short-term losses are larger for individuals who resided in or worked in Census blocks that that experienced major damage; we document that migration to other areas and separations from pre-storm employers are important channels for the damage effects. The long-term gains are widespread but they are larger for individuals who were initially employed in the construction industry.

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