

Isaac presents dilemma to parents

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As parents of an incoming first-year student at Tulane University, Ken and Robin Schlager anticipated the varying emotions they would experience during move-in weekend. What was not on their radar as they drove their daughter, Hanna, down from New Jersey was Tropical Storm Isaac and the attendant anxiety they would feel as it became evident that the storm was targeting southeastern Louisiana.

“When we first heard about a storm in the Caribbean ? it was an island event, a south Florida event,” said Ken. “It didn't look like it was coming west.”

“The big story on the news was always about the storm's impact on the Republican convention [in Tampa],” said Robin. “It didn't even faze me.”

That peace of mind changed for the Schlagers on Sunday morning (Aug. 26), the day the couple were to head back to New Jersey.

“At some point everything just shifted and the storm projections seemed to go right smack into New Orleans,” said Ken.

Returning home without your child can be for parents a heart-wrenching event in the most normal of times.

“Now all of a sudden this storm is in the Gulf and you're in this crazy situation of driving away and leaving your child ? in our case, our youngest of two children ? in a potential disaster situation,” said Ken.

Armed only with uncertain predictions by forecasters, the couple began to weigh their options and even contemplated a plan in which Robin would find a flight back to New Jersey while Ken remained in New Orleans. They ultimately decided to stick to their original plan and drive back on Sunday afternoon.

“It feels like terrible parenting,” said Ken. “You feel terribly guilty.”

And they weren't alone.

“We were all talking about it,” says Robin. “A lot of parents we talked to had concerns. But we said, 'Let's go and hope for the best.'”