Students weighed whether to stay at Rice or leave campus Wednesday as Hurricane Rita grew from a tropical storm to the third most powerful hurricane ever recorded. Rice administrators prepared provisions for students who will remain on campus and residential halls were evacuated. Rice administrators have not given a blanket recommendation on whether or not students should evacuate. Assistant to the President Mark Scheid ('83), who directs the Crisis Management Team, said Rice will prepare to shelter students who remain on campus.

Scheid said food rations are in place, buildings are safe, and an on-campus generator and freshwater well will serve campus if area utilities fail. Scheid said all parking gates will be raised, and students should park cars anywhere on campus. He will be on campus through Thursday, preparing for on-campus evacuations as far as possible, he said.

"I had a choice. I would stay right here if I were you," he said.

When Hurricane Rita nears the Gulf of Mexico, its winds and rainfall are expected to severely affect Rice, he said. "I'll be here when you need me," he said.

"We'll adjust the shifts as we go," he said. "We have all the officers here, so we can use them as needed."

"I think we should just assume that there will be a blackout next week," he said. "Power may be down for a day or two."

The Crisis Management Team decided to stay on campus through Thursday, but that students should not call REMS with problems that are not urgent. He said Rice will reassess evacuation and shelter decisions as Hurricane Rita nears.

"I worry there will be too many people on campus to provide for than absolutely essential," he said.

"We want to have enough leadership in place to communicate," he said. "We want to have enough education to communicate."