

Preparing for a Hurricane

Disaster prevention includes modifying your home to strengthen it against storms and having enough supplies on hand to weather the storm.

Read more to learn how you can prepare yourself and your family if you live in an area that is affected by hurricanes.

Developing a Family Plan

You should keep a written plan and share your plan with other friends or family. When developing a family plan, consider the following:

- Discuss the type of hazards that could affect your family. Know your home's vulnerability to storm surge, flooding and wind.
- Locate a safe room, or the safest areas in your home, for each hurricane hazard. In certain circumstances, the safest areas may not be in your home but within your community.
- Determine escape routes from your home and places to meet. These should be measured in tens of miles rather than hundreds of miles.
- Have an out-of-state friend as a family contact so that all of your family members have a single point of contact.
- Make a plan now for what to do with your pets if you need to evacuate.
- Post emergency telephone numbers by your phones, and make sure your children know how and when to call 911.
- Check your insurance coverage – flood damage is not usually covered by homeowners' insurance.
- Take first aid, CPR and disaster preparedness classes.

Creating a Disaster Supply Kit

There are certain items you need to have, regardless of where you wait out a hurricane. The disaster supply kit is a useful tool when you evacuate, as well as making you as safe as possible in your home. Even if the hurricane itself does not last very long, the effects of the hurricane can last for many days.

Keep the following items in your disaster supply kit:

- At least 1 gallon of water daily per person for three to seven days
- Food to last for three to seven days
- Blankets and pillows
- Seasonal clothing, rain gear and sturdy shoes
- First aid kit and any necessary medications
- Special items for babies and the elderly
- Toiletries
- Flashlights and extra batteries
- Battery-operated and NOAA weather radio
- Cash, since banks and ATMs may not be open or available for extended periods
- Keys
- Toys, books and games
- Important documents sealed in a waterproof container
- Tools

- Pet care items

Securing Your Home

The most important precaution you can take to reduce damage to your home and property is to protect the areas where wind can enter. According to recent wind technology research, it is important to strengthen the exterior of your house so wind and debris do not tear large openings in it. You can do this by protecting and reinforcing the roof, hurricane straps, shutters, doors and garage doors.

A great time to start securing or retrofitting your house is when you are making other improvements or adding an addition.

If a hurricane is already on its way, you may not have time to reinforce your home. To reduce the risk of damage to your home, move anything in your yard that can become flying debris inside your house or garage before a storm strikes.

Caring for Pets

Contact your veterinarian or local humane society for information on preparing your pets for an emergency. If you plan to shelter your pet, be sure to work it into your evacuation route planning.

Use the following tips when caring for a pet during a hurricane:

- Make sure that your pets are current on their vaccinations. Pet shelters may require proof of vaccines.
- Have a current photograph.
- Keep a collar with identification on your pet, and have a leash on hand to control your pet.
- Have a properly sized pet carrier for each animal. Carriers should be large enough for the animal to stand and turn around.
- Bring pets indoors well in advance of a storm.
- Pet shelters will be filled on a first come, first served basis. Call ahead and determine availability.
- If pets cannot be found after a disaster, contact the local animal control office to find out where lost animals can be recovered. Bring along a picture of your pet, if possible.
- Animals can become aggressive or defensive after a disaster, so be sure to monitor their behavior.

Animals brought to a pet shelter may be required to have the following:

- Proper identification collar and rabies tag
- Proper identification on all belongings
- Carrier or cage
- Leash
- Ample supply of food
- Water and food bowls
- Any necessary medications
- Specific care instructions
- Newspapers or trash bags for cleanup

Evacuating Your Home

One of the most important decisions you will have to make is whether you should evacuate your home.

If local officials ask you to evacuate, you should do so without delay. But unless you live in a coastal or low-lying area, an area that floods frequently, or a manufactured home, it is unlikely that emergency managers will ask you to evacuate. Use the following tips if you decide to or are required to evacuate:

- If possible, leave before local officials issue an evacuation order for your area. Even a slight delay in starting your evacuation will result in significantly longer travel times as traffic congestion worsens. Make sure you fill your car up with gas before you leave.
- Select an evacuation destination that is nearest to your home, preferably in the same county, or at least minimize the distance over which you must travel in order to reach your intended shelter location. In choosing your destination, keep in mind that the hotels and other sheltering options in most inland metropolitan areas are likely to be filled very quickly in a large, multi-county hurricane evacuation event.
- If you decide to evacuate to another county or region, be prepared to wait in traffic. The large number of people who must evacuate during a hurricane will probably cause massive delays and major congestion along most designated evacuation routes; the larger the storm, the greater the probability of traffic jams and extended travel times.
- Make arrangements to stay with the friend or relative who resides closest to your home and who will not have to evacuate. Discuss with your intended host the details of your family evacuation plan well before the beginning of the hurricane season.
- If a hotel or motel is your final intended destination during an evacuation, make reservations before you leave. Most hotels and motels will fill quickly once evacuations begin. The longer you wait to make reservations, even if an official evacuation order has not been issued for your area or county, the less likely you are to find room vacancies, especially along interstate highways and in major metropolitan areas.
- If you are unable to stay with friends or family and no hotel or motel rooms are available, then as a last resort, go to a shelter. Remember, shelters are not designed for comfort and do not usually accept pets. Bring your disaster supply kit with you to the shelter.

Resources

- National Hurricane Center: www.nhc.noaa.gov
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: www.noaa.gov
- American Red Cross: www.redcross.org
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): www.fema.gov

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