

# Getting prepared: what to expect before, during and after a hurricane

## Before a hurricane

Hurricanes are tracked for weeks before they reach land. The storms are predictable. A hurricane watch implies a storm within 48 hours of landfall. A hurricane warning occurs within 36 hours of landfall. Families often have a chance to prepare. They can leave if necessary. Families should have supplies ready. This includes preparing for quick evacuation. Families should practice evacuations. This will help make sure that all are prepared for a hurricane.

- Tell children about hurricanes in simple terms.
- Make a family preparedness plan. All family members will know what to do in case of a hurricane or other disaster. This should include a plan for pets. (See Taking Care of Your Pets on page 6.)
- Create a disaster supply kit. Use a large backpack or duffel bag. Or use an easy-to-carry covered trash container. (See Disaster Supply Kit section.)
- Practice a family disaster plan. You can evacuate quickly and safely if told to do so. (See Family Disaster Plan section.)
- Prepare your home for the storm.

## Disaster supply kit

- **Water.** One gallon daily per person for three to seven days.
- **Food.** Enough for up to a week.
  - Non-perishable packaged or canned food and juices.
  - Foods for infants or the elderly.
  - Snack foods.
  - Non-electric can opener.
  - Cooking tools and fuel.
  - Paper plates and plastic utensils.

## Blankets and pillows.

- **Clothing.** Seasonal/rain gear and sturdy shoes.
- **First aid kit, medicines and prescription drugs.**
- **Special items.** For babies and the elderly.
- **Personal hygiene items, moisture wipes.**
- **Flashlights and batteries.**
- **Radio.**
  - Battery-operated.
  - NOAA weather radio.
- **Cash.** With some small bills. Banks and ATMs may not be open.
- **Keys.**
- **Toys, books and games.**
- **Important documents.** Keep these in a waterproof container. Or resealable plastic bag.
  - Insurance.
  - Medical records.
  - Bank account numbers.
  - Social Security card.
- **Tools.** Keep a set with you.

- **Full tank of gas in your car.**

### Family disaster plan

- Discuss the hazards that could affect your family. Know if your home can be damaged by storm surge, flooding and wind.
- Find a safe room or find the safest area in your home for each hurricane hazard. Sometimes the safest area may not be in your home. It might be in your community.
- Find escape routes from your home. Find places to meet loved ones. Measure them in tens of miles rather than hundreds of miles.
- Have an out-of-state friend as a family contact. Your family should have a single contact.
- Plan what to do with your pets if you need to evacuate.
- Post emergency telephone numbers by your phones. Make sure your children know how and when to call 9-1-1.
- Check your insurance coverage. Flood damage is not usually covered by homeowners insurance.
- Stock non-perishable emergency supplies and a disaster supply kit.
- Use a NOAA weather radio. Replace its battery every six months, as you do with your smoke detectors.
- Take first aid, CPR and disaster preparedness classes.

### Preparing your home

- Install valves in your sewer traps. This will stop flood waters from backing up into drains.
- Make a list of items to bring inside if there are high winds or flooding. This includes:
  - Patio furniture.
  - Lawn decorations.
  - Tools.
  - Trash cans.
  - Planters.
- Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts. Water should drain properly.
- If you live near the water, consider raising your home. This will resist flood waters. (Check with your town's planning and zoning official for approval.)
- Raise your furnace, water heater and electric panel. Do this if they are in places that may be flooded.
- Seal walls and openings in basements. Use waterproofing compounds to stop seepage.
- Take photos of your home for insurance claims.
- Find a place to store your boat in case of a flood.
- Write down instructions for turning off utilities. This includes electric, gas and water.

### During a hurricane

#### **If a hurricane is in your area, you should:**

- Listen to the radio or TV.
- Secure your home. Close storm shutters. Secure outdoor objects. Or bring them indoors.
- Turn off utilities if told to do so. If not, turn the refrigerator to its coldest setting. Keep the doors closed.
- Turn off propane tanks. Avoid using the phone except for emergencies.
- Moor your boat if time permits.
- Fill the bathtub and other large containers with water. This will ensure a supply of water for sanitary purposes. This could be for cleaning and flushing toilets.

#### **You should evacuate if:**

- Local authorities tell you to leave. Follow their instructions.
- You live in a mobile home or temporary structure. They are hazardous during hurricanes.
- You live in a high-rise building. Hurricane winds are stronger at higher levels.

You live:

- On the coast.
- On a floodplain.
- Near a river.
- On an inland waterway.

- You feel you are in danger.

**If you cannot leave, go to your safe room. If you do not have one, follow these guidelines:**

- Stay indoors during the hurricane. Stay away from windows and glass doors.
- Close all inside doors. Secure and brace outside doors.
- Keep curtains and blinds closed. Do not be fooled if the storm stops. It could be the eye of the storm. Winds will pick up again.
- Take refuge in a small inside room, closet or hallway. Go to the lowest level of your home.
- Lie on the floor under a table or another sturdy object.

### Recovering from disaster

Recovering from a disaster takes time. It is gradual. Safety is a primary issue. Mental and physical wellbeing are important. Getting help makes the process faster and less stressful. This section offers advice on steps to take after disaster strikes. It can help you start to get back to normal.

### After the hurricane

- Check radio and TV (local or cable). Check NOAA weather radio or the Internet.
  - Roads may be closed for safety reasons.
  - You may come to a barricade or a flooded road. Turn around and go another way!
  - Avoid weakened bridges and washed-out roads. Do not drive into flooded areas.
  - Stay on firm ground. Moving water only six inches deep can sweep you off your feet.
  - Standing water may have an electrical charge. This can come from underground lines. It could also come from downed power lines.
  - Check gas, water, electrical lines and appliances for damage.
- Do not drink or prepare food with tap water. Be sure it is safe first.
- Do not use candles and open flames indoors. Use a flashlight to check for damage.
  - Be very careful if you use a chainsaw to cut fallen trees.
  - Use the telephone only to report life-threatening emergencies.
  - Wait until an area is declared safe before entering.
  - You may be using an emergency generator. Make sure the exhaust is vented to the outside.
  - Most important, be a GOOD neighbor.

**Federal Aviation Administration**

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